HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' INFLUENCE IN COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS FOR STUDENTS FROM HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS: PRACTICES THAT BUILD UPON CAPITAL WITHIN SCHOOLS

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the practices of high school principals who have built a culture in their high schools focused on college and career readiness for all students, but in particular students from historically underserved backgrounds, and to identify and describe the characteristics that they shared (Stake, 2005, 2006). This study involved case study research methods, with two case study sites. I completed the investigation with a detailed, holistic case study report of two principals with data collected between October 2014 and May 2015 at two high schools located in the metropolitan area of a large Midwestern city. Data collection involved individual interviews of principals; focus group interviews with teachers, students, and parents/legal guardians; several observations of the principals in meetings or in their schools, and document review.

The findings reveal that the high school principals engaged in a number of behaviors beginning with a personal, justice-oriented mindset that strives for equitable outcomes for all students through their leadership and advocacy in interpersonal and pedagogical relationships. For both principals, it was more than just striving for equitable outcomes—they laid a foundation and began carving a path that any student could take and end wherever her/his interests or passions resided. The flexibility of this path was mindfully and deliberately crafted by looking forward to the future, postsecondary, needs of students and mapping backwards to the first day of high school.

The two justice-oriented high school principals undertook the task of carving a path for students by creating career pathway structures in their schools that build a culture focused on both college and careers, supporting teachers and faculty as they reinforced the career pathway structures in their classrooms, through internships or mentorships, and exposing students to college and career experiences and opportunities that contextualized the classroom and school

experiences. A career pathway structure is not a model that silos students and teachers into choosing career preparation over college preparation but instead is a mutually inclusive approach of embedding career development into the academic curriculum. Both principals were mindful and deliberate in the programmatic structure of their career pathways or courses as to not isolate or pre-determine paths for students. All students were exposed to college and career experiences or opportunities in contextualized learning environments in and out of the classroom.

The justice-oriented high school principals recognized student and family diversity as an integral and unifying factor in their schools and community and ensured that every willing student participated in all college and career experiences, even if obstacles or challenges may have existed. Diversity was a common thread in discussions with both principals and their teachers, parents, and students and wove many of the study's findings together. Diversity was described by participants as rich, foundational, an asset, a unifying agent, and a perceived strength in the classrooms, in the hallways, and in the overall school community. At both schools, diversity was not regarded or celebrated as a theatrical production, but a common fiber that linked the daily occurrences or activities at both schools. Whether in the form of multilingual communications that were produced orally and in print, in the languages overheard in hallway conversations, or in the fundraising and community outreach of school faculty and staff, parents, and community partners, cultural, linguistic, and economic diversity was packaged into all shapes and sizes and the entire school community reaped its benefits.

I dedicate this study to all the students I taught as a high school teacher in a large, urban Midwestern city and all the teachers who mentor and support students with resources, opportunities, and experiences to get them to college or on a path to a career that will provide them with a living wage.

Without question, education is the key to progress and prosperity in the United States today. Whether fair or not, educational opportunity and academic achievement are directly tied to the social divisions associated with race, ethnicity, gender, first language, and social class. The level and quality of educational attainment either open doors to opportunity or close them. (Gordon, 2006, p. 25)

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I thank with a very full heart my husband, Dan, for supporting me through my education years as both a masters and doctoral student. When we first met, I was working towards my teaching certification (post college) after realizing that teaching was my true passion and calling. Along the way, my experiences and oftentimes anger about the lack of quality education, postsecondary opportunities, and lack of justice-oriented leadership and practices led me to pursue additional programs and degrees—all with Dan's support and words "just do it.**"** We had some obstacles and losses along my journey, but also the birth of our first child who reignited my commitment and passion that every, single child experiences a rich learning environment that caters to imagination and creativity in a safe, nurturing environment while supporting parents in every way possible.

My dissertation chair, professor, and greatest champion, Dr. Donald Hackmann has provided me with more than just education scholarship, but a constant "you are almost there" attitude and support even during some of my greatest challenges. I could never repay him for his mentorship and leadership other than to pay it forward to another student/s who may experience their own challenges or in my leadership in a school, university, or Board of Education. I would also like to thank my committee members for their support and the professors who have encouraged, challenged, and shaped my thinking around equity, social justice, and postsecondary education and employment. I would be remiss to also not include a special thank you to the principals, students, teachers, parent/legal guardians, and support staff at both of my case sites who opened their schools to me with open arms and devoted countless hours to answering my questions, making me feel welcomed, and providing me with any and all supporting information or documents.

Next, my son Lucas will be ecstatic to finally have an answer to his long-standing question “Mamma, are you done writing your story yet and can play with me?” or my favorite line “Mamma, you have too many papers; you really should think about recycling them or donating your books.” Aw, the wisdom of young minds.

Last, but not least, I want to thank my own parents who overcame unimaginable obstacles as poor immigrants to a country whose language they did not speak or customs they did not know to build a better life for their children. Education was always the number one priority in our home; even if they could not help us or understand it, they did everything possible to find us the resources we needed to succeed. That persistence and sacrifice lives in me and fuels my passion to provide all students with an education or learning opportunity that I hope will lead them to fulfill their own callings or passions without many of the obstacles I encountered.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The United States of America is the land of opportunity. It is a country built on the notion that with hard work and perseverance anyone can prosper and have the opportunity to achieve the unimaginable or once thought unattainable—the "American dream." Throughout our nation's history, parents have immigrated to the United States in search of better opportunities for themselves and their children. Others have overcome oppressive forces with the hope that their children would never experience such circumstances again. One common thread among these parents, and all parents, was the belief that education would provide their children with opportunities: They believed education was the universal equalizer (Mann, 1848). In the words of Horace Mann (1848), "Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origins; is the great equalizer of the conditions of men—the great balance wheel of the social machinery" (p. 87). Yet, the education necessary to improve "the conditions of [women and] men" (Mann, p. 87) or to acquire social and economic capital is not within reach for many U.S. students. Particularly, students from historically underserved populations (e.g., students of color, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, students speaking languages other than English, students from urban communities, and/or students from high minority, high poverty school neighborhoods), because of societal and institutional forces working against them or impeding their access. The educational hopes of many parents, particularly those without requisite capital or social networks rich in education and careers, may fall short of expectations when their children arrive at school with the illusion of less capital or capital not valued by the educators working within the schools.

Our early history as a nation set in motion ideologies with which we are still struggling today in education—conforming to and internalizing traditional American societal ideals

(Sampson, 1977) rooted in the culture of White, early settlers (Boykin & Toms, 1985). This history, coupled with what Stanton-Salazar (1997) considered a "liberal view of achievement in society" (p. 2), places an exorbitant emphasis on individual aptitude, motivation, and achievement and links it to adult educational and occupational outcomes. When students exhibit the attributes of high aptitude, motivation, and achievement, they arguably have adopted the requisite academic values necessary for success in school and throughout their lives (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). However, a dilemma can exist for students who do not exhibit or enter school with these schooling attributes and who possess capital that conflicts with the valued, dominant, White culture of schools.

Students from historically underserved populations can face a multitude of challenges or obstacles as they advance through the educational system (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994; Oakes, 1983, 2005; Valencia, 1997, 2010; Valenzuela, 1999; Yosso, 2005). These challenges viewed through a subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999) and deficit thinking perspective (Valencia, 1997, 2010) negatively affect students' education and economic outcomes, as they choose between dropping out of school, entering the workforce or military immediately upon high school graduation, or enrolling in postsecondary education. For many students from historically underserved populations, family and community networks provide them with the capital necessary to reach postsecondary settings (Moll & González, 1994; Yosso, 2005), but schools may diminish or subtract it along the way. Valenzuela (1999) identified two ways schools deplete capital from students:

> First, it dismisses their definition of education which is not only thoroughly grounded in Mexican culture, but also approximates the optimal definition of education advanced by Noddings (1984) and other caring theorists. Second, subtractive schooling encompasses subtractively assimilationist policies and practices that are designed to divest Mexican students of their culture and language. (p. 20)

Although the focus of Valenzuela's (1999) study were students of Mexican descent, her notion of subtractive schooling is applicable to any culture, race, ethnicity, or social class because the heart of her theory is that schools do not exist to serve the interests of non-White students. Instead, schools expect non-White students to assimilate or acculturate to the school's prevailing culture that embraces the White, middle-class society (Valenzuela, 1999).

Another example of schools depleting student capital occurs when educators and school leaders view students from historically underserved populations through a deficit lens:

> The deficit thinking paradigm, as a whole, posits that students who fail in school do so because of alleged internal deficiencies (such as cognitive and/or motivational limitations) or shortcomings socially linked to the youngster—such a familial deficits and dysfunctions. . . . The popular "at-risk" construct, now entrenched in educational circles, views poor and working class children and their families (typically of color) as predominantly responsible for school failure. (Valencia, 1997, p. xi)

Deficit thinking is the most common example of educators and school systems depleting resources from students based upon their race (Yosso, 2005). García and Guerra (2004) highlighted two examples of racism: The first form of racism was found in the ethnic and socioeconomic prejudices of students by educators, and the second was found in schools continually depriving marginalized students of educational options and opportunities by propagating overgeneralizations and misinterpretations of their culture and capital wealth. García & Guerra (2004) posited that this finding is not exclusive of schools but relates to American society as a whole, because school cultures directly reflect societal values.

Statement of the Problem

Some scholars argue that the promise of the American dream is unrealistic for many students, particularly students from historically underserved populations, because the education necessary to acquire the social and economic capital is being withheld from them (Valenzuela, 1999). This dilemma is confirmed by data disaggregated by race and socioeconomic status on

high school dropout rates, educational attainment levels of students from historically underserved populations, and estimated future earnings potential of high school dropouts and college graduates (Digest of Education Statistics, 2015; Kena et al., 2015). In 2014, 1.3 million Black and Hispanic 16-24-year-olds were not enrolled in high school nor had earned a high school credential compared to 1.1 million White 16-24-year-olds (Digest of Education Statistics, 2015, Table 219.71).[1] In comparison to 1999 statistics, 10.8% more Black and Hispanic students earned their high school diplomas or equivalency certificates in 2013 (Digest of Education Statistics, 2015, Table 219.30). Additionally, Black and Hispanic student enrollment in undergraduate programs increased by 18% between 1976 and 2014, respectively 5% and 13% (Digest of Education Statistics, 2015, Table 306.10).

The necessity of graduation from high school or college is also an economic argument. The lack of education or career skills compounds over the course of a student's lifetime to produce negative consequences with regard to employment opportunities, earning income, creating wealth, living longer and healthier lives, and owning a home (Belfield & Levin, 2007; Wilson, 1996). For instance, over the course of 20 years, the difference in the earnings potential, in constant 2013 dollars, between a typical female high school graduate and college graduate is approximately $392,000 and for males is $404,000 (Kena et al., 2015). Over the course of 20 years, a female high school graduate has the potential to earn approximately $102,000 more than a female without a high school diploma or equivalency would potentially earn; the earnings differential for males is approximately $146,000 (Kena et al., 2015).

Critics argue that negative ramifications of indicators (high school dropout rates, educational attainment, undergraduate enrollment, and future earnings potential) stem from

[1] n = 2,527 (in thousands) students.

individuals' early development in homes in which schooling attributes were neither cultivated nor encouraged (Valencia, 1997). However, Critical Race theorists argue this notion produces a deficit perspective in society and schools as students "lacking" social and cultural capital (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994; Valencia, 1997, 2010; Valenzuela, 1999; Yosso, 2005). Using a deficit lens perspective prevents educators in schools from acknowledging the cultural wealth students bring to school and contribute to society, because society as a whole embraces and values the dominant White, middle class culture (Bourdieu, 1977).

Rationale for the Study

Extensive research has been conducted over the past 40 years that has analyzed and critiqued the processes students undergo as they consider postsecondary options. Since the 1970s, various perspectives and models have been created and utilized to investigate the college choice process. Paulsen (1990) reviewed 20 years of research, highlighting the social perspectives and enrollment models that research has identified as college choice influencers, concluding that families greatly influenced their children's understanding of postsecondary options and looked to schools to fill their voids or gaps. Schools, therefore, provide a crucial component to students' postsecondary opportunities, especially for students from historically underserved populations; yet, many challenges persist.

The first challenge educators in schools must overcome is the belief that families of color and those whose primary language is not English do not value education. According to Valencia (1997), many researchers and educators believe that a student's failure in school is due to "internal deficiencies (such as cognitive and/or motivational limitations . . . [or] familial deficits or dysfunctions" (p. xi). Yet, Villalpando and Solórzano (2005) found the contrary, as they linked the value placed in education by parents of color to their children's postsecondary

aspirations. This research can be used to shift the deficit thinking in schools, for educators who view students from historically underserved populations as lacking social and cultural capital. Allowing this negative thinking to go unchallenged perpetuates the victimization of students by societal and educational injustices, because students themselves cannot "drive those changes" (Bergerson, 2009, p. 44).

The second challenge school personnel must consider is with regard to students who speak languages other than English. Gandara (1999) found academic barriers to non-English speaking students' college choice processes, noting that literacy in both English and Spanish actually played a constructive role in the process. Yet, policies in many schools mandate English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Language Learner (ELL) courses for non-English speaking students (Gonzales, Stoner, & Jovel, 2003) and do not encourage or teach literacy in students' native languages. These policies, whose goal is to minimize educational inequities of students who speak languages other than English, may actually "hinder their progress toward postsecondary education" (Bergerson, 2009, p. 45). Examined through a community cultural wealth lens (Yosso, 2005), the second language capabilities of students from historically underserved populations and their parents is a form of cultural capital that has been overlooked and considered to be a deficit, instead of an asset. Yosso (2005) highlighted the language capabilities of students from historically underserved populations and cited three decades of research underscoring "the value of bilingual education and emphasizes the connections between radicalized cultural history and language" (p. 78).

A third challenge substantiated by researchers indicates that academic resources and curricula negatively influence the college readiness for students from historically underserved populations. The academic resources that affect the postsecondary options of students are access

to a quality curriculum and college preparatory academics (Lucas & Good, 2001; Solórzano & Ornelas, 2004; Teranishi, Allen, & Solórzano, 2004) and the academic quality of the school attended (Gardner, Ritblatt, & Beatty, 2000). For historically underserved students, aspirations of college decline due to insufficient college preparatory coursework (Bergerson, 2009), lack of understanding regarding what it means to go to college, and/or uncertainty about how to gather information about postsecondary options (Hossler, Schmidt, & Vesper, 1999; Morgan, 2002). Perna and colleagues (2008) found that resources available to high schools are related directly to the socioeconomic levels of their student clientele. Schools situated in wealthier communities typically receive larger amounts of funding per child that usually facilitate better quality schools, teachers, curricula, facilities, and infrastructure (Perna et al., 2008), whereas children who live in poor neighborhoods or urban environments have dramatically reduced resources within their schools (Boykin & Noguera, 2011).

Student access to high quality and rigorous courses and resource support to guide and assist them with postsecondary options can be affected negatively by a lack of school funding (Perna et al., 2008). Schools with high concentrations of students from historically underserved populations typically do not have resources that would allow for advanced placement courses, which would deepen students' content knowledge and facilitate their college access (Solórzano & Ornelas, 2004). Furthermore, students from historically underserved populations do not enroll in high-level mathematics courses at the same rate as their White counterparts, which also restricts their access to college (Adelman, 2006). The lack of exposure to rigorous academics for many students from historically underserved populations diminishes their opportunities to explore postsecondary options or visualize their enrollment in colleges because conversations about college are less likely to occur in low-level courses (Hurtado, Inkelas, Briggs, & Rhee,

1997). This predicament, researchers argue, "leads to a loss of talent" over the course of students' lives (Hurtado, Inkelas, Briggs, & Rhee, 1997, p. 62). The lack of high school resources and access to rigorous courses for students from historically underserved populations, therefore, is further compounded by their lack of information about postsecondary options. These challenges along with two essential indicators of college preparation, completion of rigorous coursework and access to information about college, are inequitably distributed to students designated by race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic backgrounds (Bergerson, 2009).

In addition to adequate college preparation, Cabrera and La Nasa (2001) identified three prerequisites for attending college: (a) meeting academic entrance requirements, (b) graduating from high school, and (c) completing college applications. Accomplishing these tasks was influenced by individuals, families, and schools (Cabrera & La Nasa), with schools at the epicenter. Cabrera and La Nasa asserted that completion of these college attendance tasks begins prior to entering high school by increasing the academic preparedness of students through interventions, improving school resources, sharing more information with parents, and providing opportunities for course and college financing planning. Thus, without access to social and economic capital, students from historically underserved populations often are denied a quality education that can free them from societal forces that hinder their social mobility and economic opportunities.

Bergerson (2009) noted that there is a dearth of "qualitative and mixed method studies that can delve into the how and why" (p. 116) of student decisions in the college choice process. The challenge for educators and school leaders, in addition to looking past traditional forms of social and cultural capital, is to reconsider whether schooling structures and policies perpetuate what Bourdieu (1977) feared: education propagating societal inequities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this multi-site case study was to explore and understand the leadership practices of high school principals as they advocated and created a culture focused on college and career readiness for students from historically underserved populations. The study also sought to understand whether social justice ideologies influenced the philosophy of the high school principals as they created a college and career readiness culture in their schools while embracing the cultural assets of students from historically underserved populations. The goal of the study, through a critical, advocacy research paradigm, was to develop an action agenda or set of recommendations to assist principals and school leaders with creating equitable access to college and career readiness pathways for all students regardless of their cultural, financial, familial, and social backgrounds.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. How does a high school principal advocate for and support students from underserved populations in accessing postsecondary opportunities in college and career?
2. What system or structures are in place to facilitate a college and career ready pathway for all students, but in particular students from underserved populations?
3. How do the school's faculty and staff build upon or embrace the cultural assets students from underserved populations bring to school as they and their families prepare for postsecondary opportunities?

Conceptual Framework

The central focus of my study was to understand "how institutional theories, norms, and practices in schools and society lead to social, political, economic, and educational inequities" (Tillman, 2002, p. 147). At the heart of this understanding is a social justice framework envisioned by Kincheloe and Steinberg (1995) as a just, democratic, empathic, and optimistic

education. I argue that supporting students from historically underserved populations in college and career readiness is grounded in education that is socially just, democratic, empathic, and optimistic (Kincheloe & Steinberg) and led by a school leader whose inclusive practices blur the lines around race, ethnicity, class, and culture (Dantley & Tillman, 2006). Additionally, examining school practices and policies within Kincheloe and Steinberg's framework allows for critical reflection and dialogue and shift schools and school leaders away from "pathologizing practices and deficit thinking" (Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2005, p. 3).

Given the contested and complex nature of social justice (McKenzie et al., 2008), identifying principles or concepts of social justice is more useful, as principles then can be molded into definitions that grow naturally out of practice and everyday situations (Dantley & Tillman, 2006). Real-life examples of school leaders molding definitions of social justice in schools are found in research conducted by Marshall and Ward (2004) and Theoharis (2004, 2007, 2008). The researchers investigated day-to-day lived experiences and practices of urban school leaders who embodied social justice ideologies and concluded that urban principals firmly believed that promoting equity and social justice was fundamental to improving the education of marginalized and historically underserved students.

One consideration for school leaders when building a culture of college and career readiness for all students is Conley's (2010) four-dimensional framework. The conceptual model was created when Conley (2010) investigated the college and career readiness practices of secondary schools through the dimensions of meta-cognitive abilities, subject-level knowledge, student meta-cognition and study skills, and an understanding of the college system. Conley (2010) then articulated a set of seven principles or processes to enhance the social capital within high schools to break down access barriers to postsecondary education and/or careers. However,

when Conley's (2010) model is examined within the framework of Leadership for Social Justice a gap emerges as to how students "know," "think," "act," and "go" (Conley, 2012, p. 2) in comparison to how educators and school leaders "know," "think," "act," and "go."

Integrating Conley's (2010) four dimensions in schools could improve the college and career readiness of students, which Conley asserted is not simply about the courses students complete during high school, their grades or grade point averages, standardized test scores, and college entrance exam scores. Rather, it is about the skills students learn "along with a set of work habits and self-knowledge not much different from what is required of a . . . baccalaureate program" (p. 5) that will prepare them for entry to universities, community colleges, training programs, or advancement in their chosen career pathways. All students must leave their high schools with "the ability to select an occupation that does in fact have a career pathway associated with it rather than simply taking the first job that comes along" (Conley, p. 5). Conley based the need for this model on the premise that secondary schools have failed to work for all students and have become a self-fulfilling prophecy for students defined by race, class, culture, and gender, thus reducing or limiting possibilities for some students. However, a limitation of Conley's (2010, 2012) model, when examined through the lens of social justice, is the lack of equity and access by historically underserved students in their everyday school experiences (Castro, 2013). According to Castro (2013), this is "a reality that this nation knows too well" (p. 300) and for many, brought to light by the writings of Kozol (1991, 2005) who documented the educational inequities he found in classrooms and schools of low-income students, students of color, and students whose first language is not English throughout the United States.

To bridge the void highlighted by Castro (2013) in Conley's (2010, 2012) model, I have proposed a conceptual leadership model (Figure 1) to create schools that provided equitable

access to college and career readiness for all students through a social justice framework. The model is a continuous, cyclical process that identifies opportunity gaps, incorporates a college and career readiness culture through a career pathway structure, and critiques the process, policy, program, or structure through the social justice framework (just, democratic, optimistic, and empathic) of Kincheloe and Steinberg (1995). The two most important components of the model: identifying opportunity gaps and examining them through the lens of social justice. My study highlighted a specific social justice framework envisioned by Kincheloe and Steinberg (1995) because it offers "the most promise and potential to meet both the academic and the social justice needs of complex, diverse, and beleaguered education systems" (Shields, 2010b, p. 562).

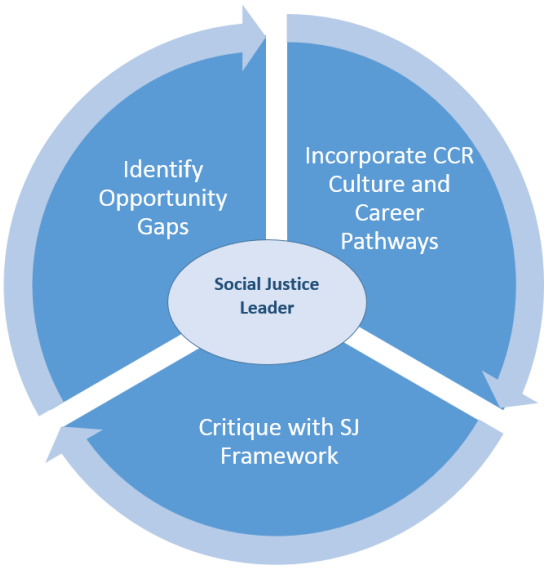

Figure 1. Leadership model to create schools that provide equitable access to college and career readiness for all students through a social justice framework.

Significance of the Study

Acknowledging the challenges students from historically underserved populations must overcome to access the knowledge in schools highlights the need for school officials to examine critically their structures, policies, and practices to ensure that children are not denied the

opportunity to learn (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Yet, the reality is that schools and educators fail to consider the intercentricity of race, class, and a dominant ideology (Solórzano, 1997, 1998) that denies some children access to quality learning experiences. Schools have the transformative energy to empower youth; yet, they historically have repressed and ostracized students from historically underserved populations (Yosso, 2005). The "contradictory nature of education" (Yosso, 2005, p. 74) arguably is a critical social justice issue; specifically, the deficit perspective of schools disguised by notions of "meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality and equal opportunity" (Yosso, p. 73).

It is this predicament—the existence of schools failing to meet the academic needs of all students that leads us to examine the role of school leaders and, in particular, school principals. The principal's role is complex and challenging, as principals are charged to increase student achievement, meet demands of standards based accountability, lead teachers and staff, and improve teaching and learning practices all within local context of school and community with diminishing resources and monies. At the same time, principals are asked "to ensure that every learner—in whatever learning environment that learner is found—has the greatest opportunity to learn, enhanced by the resources and supports necessary to achieve competence, excellence, independence, responsibility, and self-sufficiency for school and for life" (Scott, 2001, p. 6). To achieve Scott's (2001) goal, school leaders must become change agents and challenge the longstanding social inequalities that exist in schools (Foster, 2004) and "understand their ethical and moral obligation to create schools that promote and deliver social justice" (Grogan & Andrews, 2002, p. 250). Without equity and the assurance by school leaders to serve all students well with unlimited access and encouragement, our schools and leaders are simply reinforcing the status quo and political rhetoric. Grounding my study in the practices of school leaders was

important because the influence they exert in schools is directly linked to the social and cultural viewpoints and concerns of society at large (Giroux, 1997).

Researchers have found a significant relationship between principals and the overall effectiveness on their schools and student outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b, 1998, 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Leithwood & Louis, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). This finding reinforces reviews of empirical research wherein the direct and indirect effects of leadership on student outcomes is significant, albeit small (Creemers & Reetzig, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Nor is the effect less influential because leaders do not affect change on their own, but through others: the value is in understanding leadership practices and behaviors (DuFour & Marzano, 2011).

The significance of this study for district- and building-level leaders, principals, teachers, students, researchers, and parents was four-fold. First, this study sought to create an action agenda to address what Yosso (2005) called the "contradictory nature of education" (p. 74) and the most important social justice issue of our time. This agenda can be used to improve policies and practices and in all schools—not just schools with students from historically underserved populations, because creating school structures that embody social justice beliefs benefits all students and communities (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006; Shields, 2004; Theoharis, 2007). Second, this study created a framework that educators can use to develop their own school culture matrices to shed light on "behaviors and values" (Yosso, 2005, p. 75) of their schools' families and revise or restructure practices, policies, and pedagogy around their school community's cultural wealth versus expecting their community to "fit" the preexisting cultural model. Caution, however, must be taken not to overgeneralize about students' or family cultures

or immediately categorize students as they may self-identify with multiple cultures. Although complex, this approach may begin to open the dialogue around expectations or preconceived notions about students and their academic potential. The agenda to guide this work is based on García and Guerra's (2004) argument that a framework does not exist to understand how schools are shaped by students' social, cultural, and linguistic capital and educators' misinterpretations of students' culture. Third, administrators will be able to use the modified college and career readiness framework based on Conley's (2010) research and four-dimensional model to question and analyze their schools' structures and policies that may interfere with the college and career readiness of students from historically underserved populations. Finally, this study contributes to the scholarly research, as a gap currently exists in the literature as to how social justice leadership practices, as an organizational model and practical approach, can support school leaders in preparing all high school students, in particular, historically underserved students.

Overview of the Methodology

This multi-site case study sought to understand the practices and/or strategies two high school principals undertook to prepare students from historically underserved populations for postsecondary opportunities, in college or careers, while building upon and embracing the cultural assets students bring to school. This problem required a research design that would deepen one's understanding of the lived experiences and/or challenges secondary school principals may face in eradicating or critically examining barriers in their schools' structures and policies that may affect postsecondary access for students from historically underserved populations. The challenge, thus, for school leaders is to look past traditional forms of social and cultural capital and reconsider school policies and practices that perpetuate what Bourdieu (1977) feared—education propagating societal inequities. This issue requires an "action agenda

for reform" (Creswell, 2009, p. 9). As advocates and change agents for students from historically underserved populations, the goal is to improve the education landscape for these students through empowerment and collaborative efforts (Creswell, 2009).

The paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) or worldview (Guba, 1990) of the study lent itself to a qualitative approach, as my research sought to explore and understand leadership practices that have embraced the cultural assets of students from historically underserved backgrounds and empower all students to reach postsecondary opportunities. This qualitative study employed multi-site case study methods. I observed high school principals in their natural settings (the school), in meetings and/or discussions with school faculty members, students, and/or parents/legal guardians; conversed with participants in interviews and during observations; and reviewed documentation created by or envisioned by the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

A researcher's interest in the case study also influences the research approach (Stake, 2005). I was interested in this study for two reasons. First, it was based on my own personal background as an immigrant and student whose first language was not English and lived in a poor, working-class, White, ethnic neighborhood on the south side of a large, Midwestern urban city. Most of my neighbors did not speak English and it was not until a kind, generous woman who worked with my mother at a factory offered to teach English to her and me. Shortly thereafter, a young teacher moved upstairs from my parents and me, and she began tutoring me in English and reading. I attended a small, Catholic school with mostly English-speaking students and minimal to no support in my language development nor language support for my parents, who for most of my elementary school years entrusted me in the care of Sister Mary, the school's principal. My parents did not speak English for many years and in the interim, I was their translator. I was the first in my family to attend college, a selective, research-based land

grant university, and to subsequently earn a Master's degree in teaching. My career as an educator was the second reason for my interest in this study. During my 8-year teaching experience in an urban, high-minority, high-poverty school, I witnessed and faced many of the same experiences I had encountered during my elementary years as an immigrant with limited English language in the lives of my students. It was shocking and surprising to find that more than a decade after my experiences, schools had not changed much in their support and acknowledgement of immigrant families and their cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. It was frustrating to witness a void in a social justice framework and leadership practices that acknowledged race and cultural capital as assets and not as deficits. Overall, there was a lack of cultural relevancy and understanding as to how the schools' policies and practices marginalized and silenced students, families, and teachers and thus inhibited students' postsecondary success because of a lack of equity and excellence for all students. My experiences, along with research and literature that reinforced my experiences, highlighted the need for advocacy and change by sharing compelling stories and practices from the field. In my study, the case "is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else" (Stake, 2005, p. 437): The practices or actions of principals leading schools with a social justice oriented framework.

Limitations

The first limitation of this study is the generalizability of the study's findings to schools in an urban and a suburban school district. A consideration was made as to school districts that may be controlled by a city or town's mayor, whose local site management receives information filtered through multiple leadership levels and whose school leaders are not accountable to or hired by the school district's school board, but a pseudo political arm of the school board. A

second limitation of the study was the limited amount of time spent with each case site participant (i.e., school principals, school faculty members, students, and parents/legal guardians), which varied from approximately 45-150 minutes and dependent upon the participant group, interview format, time of day, and scheduling constraints. A third limitation was the limited amount of time spent with each principal in her/his school or at an off-site school event; between interviews and observations (e.g., conducting school walk-throughs and attending or presiding over meetings), I visited each principal on approximately five separate occasions. My investigation and data collection period occurred between October 2014 and May 2015. Thus, my study period cannot be used to base broad conclusions on the efficacy of practices and/or strategies high school principals undertook to prepare students from historically underserved populations for postsecondary opportunities, in college or careers, while building upon the cultural assets students brought to school. A fourth limitation was the use of focus group interviews with school faculty members and students nominated by the school principal and in the case of the students, also nominated by school faculty members. Due to the nature of nominations, I did not get an opportunity to meet the faculty members or students prior to their focus group interviews and thus did not establish rapport or trust which may affect the truthfulness of their responses. A fifth limitation of the study was the selection process for the school principals, as nominations were sought based on the study's criteria. School data does not represent all school principals who have created or are supporting a college and career readiness structure within a social justice framework.

Delimitations

The case study sites were limited to public schools in the metropolitan area of a large Midwestern city and served students in grades 9-12. In addition, potential case study sites were

limited to high schools with a high minority, high poverty criteria: A high school with at least 50% of the student population identified for free or reduced lunch and representing a minority majority demographic. Specially, school students from historically underserved populations: students of color, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, students speaking languages other than English, students from urban communities, and/or students from high minority, high poverty school neighborhoods. I gathered preliminary data to confirm the criteria from state, district, and school data portals.

Definition of Terms

The following working definitions are used throughout this study.

College and career readiness. College and career readiness is

> the level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit-bearing course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate program or transfer to a baccalaureate program, or in a high-quality certificate program that enables students to enter a career pathway with potential future advancement. (Conley, 2010, p. 21)

Deficit thinking. Deficit thinking

> posits that students who fail in school do so because of alleged internal deficiencies (such as cognitive and/or motivational limitations) or shortcomings socially linked to the youngster—such a familial deficits and dysfunctions. . . . The popular "at-risk" construct, now entrenched in educational circles, views poor and working class children and their families (typically of color) as predominantly responsible for school failure. (Valencia, 1997, p. xi)

Social justice leaders. Social justice leaders "advocate, lead, and keep at the center of their practice and vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically marginalizing factors in the United States" (Theoharis, 2004, p. 8).

Students from historically underserved populations. Students of color, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, students speaking languages other than English, students from urban communities, and/or students from high minority, high poverty school neighborhoods.

Subtractive schooling. Subtractive schooling is "the erosion of students' social capital evident in the presence and absence of academically oriented networks among immigrant and U.S.-born youth" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 20).

Summary

This chapter introduced my dissertation case study and the rationale and purpose to investigate and understand the leadership practices of high school principals as they supported a college and career readiness pathway for students from historically underserved populations. The study also sought to understand whether social justice ideologies influenced the philosophy of the principals as they built upon or embraced the cultural assets students from historically underserved populations brought to schools to enhance their college and career readiness.

Chapter Two provides a literature review of the role cultural and social capital plays in closing the postsecondary opportunity gap, in addition to providing an economic argument for providing all students an opportunity to learn. Next, I introduce social justice leadership practices, as an organizational model and practical approach in preparing all high school students, but particularly historically underserved students, for both college and careers. I conclude by examining how high school principals create systems within their schools can lead to college and career readiness with lead their schools with an education that is socially just, democratic, empathic, and optimistic with leadership practices that blur the lines around race, ethnicity, class, and culture. I also provide an analysis of Conley's (2010) college and career readiness conceptual model. Chapter Three describes the research methodology of my qualitative case study. This chapter describes the study's design, participant selection, research procedures, and data analysis.

Chapter Four provides a detailed, holistic case study report of two principals. Through interviews, focus group sessions, observations, and document review, four themes emerged about the leadership practices of the study's two principals. They were: developing career pathways, engaging advisory boards comprised of industry and business leaders in the school's curriculum and career pathways, providing students any and every type of opportunity to further learning and career interests, and empowering teachers and students to participate in and take responsibility for their own teaching and learning.

Chapter Five presents a detailed, rich description of each of my research study's findings with cross-case analysis. Chapter Six presents a discussion of my overall study with implications and recommendations for future practice and research. I discuss a conceptual leadership model I developed to create schools that provided equitable access to college and career readiness for all students through a social justice framework. It a continuous, cyclical process that identifies opportunity gaps, incorporates a college and career readiness culture through a career pathway structure, and critiques the process, policy, program, or structure through the social justice framework (just, democratic, optimistic, and empathic) of Kincheloe and Steinberg (1995). I also offer recommendations for current practitioners and those aspiring to lead classrooms and schools with a focus on social justice and equity.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Extensive research has been conducted over the past four decades that has investigated the processes students undergo as they consider postsecondary options. Since the 1970s, various perspectives and models have been created and utilized to investigate the college choice process. Paulsen (1990) reviewed 20 years of research highlighting the social perspectives and enrollment models identified by research as college choice influencers: student and family background; postsecondary institution factors; financial factors; recruiting models built on the characteristics of where high school students live and their family characteristics; alternatives to attending college; choosing an institution based on size or designation (public institution versus private institution); and college choice phases of predisposition, search, and choice. Researchers concluded that families greatly influenced postsecondary options, but also looked to schools to fill their voids or gaps (Bergerson, 2009; Gamez-Vargas & Oliva, 2013). Even if parents are unable to actualize or materialize their hopes and aspirations for their children, they know that schooling and education can provide their children with opportunities (Gandara, 1982, 1995; Gamez-Vargas & Oliva, 2013). The school, as the most common institutional agent for youth, is not only the great equalizer of opportunity (Jencks et al., 1972) but also a critical support component for families and children's consideration of postsecondary opportunities, particularly for children from historically underserved populations (Gamez-Vargas & Oliva, 2013).

Education by itself, though, does not adequately prepare youth for the demands of today and tomorrow's world (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2003). Relationships with institutional agents or resourceful agents in addition to activities organized within social structures, such as schools, communities, or family, are key in the socialization process for youth (Stanton-Salazar, 2001,

2011; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2003). Yet, when the socialization process is compounded with race and class issues, the discussion shifts to privilege for middle- and upper-class youth (Ianni, 1998; McIntosh, 1998) and to exclusion for youth who live in economically depressed communities or from communities isolated by race (Aronowitz, 2003). For middle- and upper-class youth, institutions and/or institutional agents ensure that they have the resources or opportunities "to prepare them for adult positions of power and influence" (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2003, p. 232). Yet, according to Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2003), institutions and institutional agents function more to protect "low-status youth . . . from ecological dangers and forms of alienation" (p. 232) than in directing resources their way for future opportunities or aspirations. Research has found that institutional agents can have positive benefits, guiding youth away from certain risk factors and facilitating their transition to adulthood (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

Grounding my study in school leaders is important because the influence they exert in schools is directly linked to the social and cultural viewpoints and concerns of society-at-large (Giroux, 1997). According to Dantley and Tillman (2006), "as education leaders, public intellectuals recognize the demanding labor of examining the ways in which schools and other systems help to maintain the social, political, and economic status quo" (pp. 24-25). Taken one step further, a school leader "questions cultural realities, motivated by a need to understand the underlying presuppositions and values that provide an explanation as to why these cultural realities exist" (Dantley & Tillman, p. 25). An administrator who is a social justice leader adopts the role of a public intellectual to create schools that embody social justice values because the leader embodies "arrogance and humility, lead[s] with intense visionary passion, and maintain[s] a tenacious commitment to her or his vision of social justice" (Theoharis, 2008, p. 12). At the

same time, these leaders shape students into critical consumers of education who can free themselves from the confines of social and cultural oppression (Dantley & Tillman). This perspective, grounded in democratic principles, shifts the focus of school leaders from managers to change agents who "work to change the shape and contour of future democratically grounded societies" (Dantley & Tillman, p. 25).

This review of literature encompasses four major strands. First, the role of social and cultural capital in schools and its relationship to postsecondary opportunities for historically underserved students is discussed. Second, the role school principals and their relationship to student outcomes and overall effectiveness on their schools. Third, social justice as a conceptual framework for school leaders is examined. Fourth, I will provide an analysis of Conley's (2010) college and career readiness conceptual model. Altogether, this review will create a roadmap or conceptual model to guide school principals in their mission to ensure equitable practices and policies are enacted in their schools to prepare historically underserved students for postsecondary opportunities in college and careers.

The Role Cultural and Social Capital Plays in Closing the Postsecondary Opportunity Gap

In this section, I discuss literature that informs our understanding of structural inequities in schools, and society at-large, from both a cultural and social perspective. I begin the discussion with an economic overview for postsecondary education or a career path that will provide students with independence and self-sufficiency and, for some students, break the cycle of poverty. Next, I provide a definition of the opportunity gap, with comparison to the achievement gap, as it relates to student achievement. Throughout, I reference scholars and researchers who challenge educators to consider the way education systems or schools access or restrict capital and the empowering role of educators as institutional agents. In particular, I

address how educators often fail to use their role or power as empowering institutional agents to build upon the cultural assets students bring to school in preparation for postsecondary opportunities.

Access to capital, whether economic, social, or cultural, positively contributes to an individual's path to postsecondary education and career opportunities. However, other factors, such as self-fulfilling prophecies, deficit thinking, and societal forces, intervene to restrict access for students who once aspired to attend college or earn a well-paying job, or for parents who considered education as the pathway to a better future for their children. Capital contributes to hierarchies in society (Bourdieu, 1977) and education is seen as the way to change one's place within the hierarchy—a way to equalize or level the playing field. Unfortunately, postsecondary institutions, Bourdieu (1977) found, actually reinforce existing hierarchies because they value only particular forms of capital. Thus, a student without the right capital most likely will not attain college credentials, as Bourdieu asserted that a student most likely would not enter or succeed in college without sufficient economic and social capital.

The economic argument. Loosely defined, economic capital equates to money and wealth. On one hand, economic capital can provide students with access to such privileges as college preparatory activities, ACT/SAT test preparation, private tutoring, private college counselors, museum and theater excursions, and many other purchased resources that can support the academic development of a student. On the other hand, at a very basic level, economic capital provides for a student's physiological, safety, and security needs, which are foundational to self-actualization of her/his potential and inner purpose (Maslow, 1943). These basic elements are fundamental for the healthy social development of children, but sadly, many poor children lack these essentials (Neher, 1991). It is unsurprising that some children do not

achieve in school because they lack these foundational needs (Boykin & Noguera, 2011) or because they are hungry or homeless (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Rothstein, 2004).

Children cannot control the circumstances of their birth—whether they are born to parents with wealth or not (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Nor can students predetermine the neighborhoods in which they will live or the schools they attend; consequently, some suffer "the debilitating effects of poverty . . . that deny young people consistent access to institutional (material) resources (e.g., well-funded schools and parks)" (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2003, p. 233). Lack of access to material resources or ecological conditions (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2003) may be further intensified by family income or parental education, two indicators researchers cite as predictors of academic success in children (Jencks et al., 1972). This finding is of no surprise, as affluent children typically live in affluent neighborhoods that support affluent schools and parental access to wealth to further enrich the educational experiences so their children excel academically (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Although many children who are not born into affluence often do excel academically and professionally (Boykin & Noguera, 2011), research has identified achievement gaps between wealthy and poor children (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Kozol, 2005) as well as disparities based on children's race and socioeconomic backgrounds (Boykin & Noguera, 2011).

The achievement gap or educational inequities (Blanford, 2011) compound over the course of a student's lifetime to produce negative consequences with regard to employment opportunities, earning income, creating wealth, living longer and healthier lives, and home ownership (Belfield & Levin, 2007; Wilson, 1996). For instance, over the course of 20 years, the difference in the earnings potential, in constant 2013 dollars, for a typical female high school

graduate and college graduate amounts to approximately $392,000 (Kena et al., 2015). The same metric for males amounts to approximately $404,000 (Kena et al., 2015). In comparison over the course of 20 years in constant 2013 dollars, a female high school graduate has the potential to earn approximately $102,000 more than a female without a high school diploma or equivalency would potentially earn; the earnings differential for males is approximately $146,000 (Kena et al., 2015).

Recent data also highlight the unemployment rates and job force participation rates of adults who earn a high school diploma or equivalency and those who do not. Twenty-five percent of high school dropouts aged 25 years and older found themselves unemployed in 2014 compared to 19% of high school graduates and 7% of college graduates (Kena et al., 2015). These economic indicators, the difference in earnings potential, the decrease in median annual earnings, and higher unemployment rates, for high school dropouts affect their ability to buy and maintain homes, generate wealth, support themselves and their families, and earn income to escape the debilitating cycle of poverty and social support programs.

The wealth of cultural capital. The theory of cultural reproduction espoused by Bourdieu (1977) provides a historical perspective on the social discourse of inequality. His theories have been referenced widely in the field of education by providing insight into social and academic differences of various societal groups and, specifically, the variance in academic success between students of color and White students (Yosso, 2005). Bourdieu argued that capital (cultural, social, and economic) can be acquired through education, if one is not born into a family whose knowledge is valued (Yosso, 2005). Yet, a dilemma arises regarding whether the student whose family does not value knowledge or cultural capital inherently possesses the requisite skills and strategies to access the knowledge conveyed in schools. These requisite skills

and strategies, Bourdieu argued, are those of the dominant culture, White, middle-class, or valued society. The dissonance created by a value system or dominant culture that stereotypes non-White or non-middle- or upper-class individuals as "others" has created challenges that negatively affect students' education and economic outcomes as they choose between postsecondary education and jobs immediately out of high school or as high school dropouts. The notion of subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999) is applicable here because the heart of the theory is that schools do not exist to serve the interests of non-White students, but expect non-White students to assimilate or acculturate to the school's prevailing culture that embraces the White, middle class society.

The notion of a dominant or valued society provides the backdrop to Bourdieu's (1977) cultural reproduction theory, which posits that the dominant group limits access to requisite skills and strategies to acquiring capital by promoting its own culture. This exertion of power and value judgment hinders social mobility of non-dominant groups (Yosso, 2005). Another interpretation of Bourdieu's theory is that some groups are perceived as being "culturally wealthy while others are culturally poor" (Yosso, 2005, p. 76). The group possessing cultural wealth is White and holds membership in the middle or upper class, which becomes the standard against which all other groups are judged (Yosso, 2005). Following this logic, students from historically underserved populations are considered lacking in cultural wealth; therefore, school officials attempt to fill the void (Valenzuela, 1999) with the dominant, White cultural mindset. The assumption that students from historically underserved populations lack cultural wealth reinforces a deficit-thinking paradigm in schools and society at large (García & Guerra, 2004; Yosso, 2005).

Education and schooling were meant to equalize inequities in society; however, Bourdieu (1977) feared that education was inadvertently contributing to inequities in society and many researchers have documented its occurrence in schools (Bergerson, 2009; García & Guerra, 2004; Kozol, 1991; Valencia, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999; Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005; Yosso, 2005). However, a cultural wealth paradigm, or asset-oriented perspective (García & Guerra, 2004; Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005), provides a glimpse of hope by challenging and expanding upon Bourdieu's cultural capital deficits. This alternative paradigm suggests that additional forms of capital exist to enhance or benefit a student's education and ultimately pathway to college (Bergerson, 2009).

The first challenge educators must overcome to address a cultural wealth paradigm is the belief that families of color or second language do not value education (García & Guerra, 2004; Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005; Yosso, 2005). Historically, educators, as well as society at large, have believed that a student's academic failure is due to "internal deficiencies (such as cognitive and/or motivational limitations . . . [or] familial deficits or dysfunctions" (Valencia, 1997, p. xi). The contrary is true, however, as research by Villalpando and Solórzano (2005) links the value placed in education by parents of color and their children's postsecondary aspirations. This research can be used to shift deficit thinking in schools, because allowing this systemic thinking to go unchallenged perpetuates the victimization of students by societal and educational injustices as students cannot "drive those changes" (Bergerson, 2009, p. 44).

Another challenge educators must overcome relates to students who speak languages other than English. Citing academic barriers to predominantly Spanish-speaking students' college choice processes, Gandara (1999) argued that literacy in both English and Spanish played a constructive role in the process. However, school programs mandate English as a Second

Language for students who do not speak English (Gonzales, Stoner, & Jovel, 2003), and they typically do not encourage or teach literacy in languages other than English unless the student is enrolled in a world language course. Although the intention of this policy is to minimize inequities experienced by students who speak languages other than English, ELL policies may actually thwart their postsecondary advancement (Bergerson, 2009). Examined through a community cultural wealth lens (Yosso, 2005), second language capabilities of students and the value placed in education by parents of color are forms of cultural capital that have been overlooked and should be considered as assets rather than deficits. Yosso (2005) highlighted the language capabilities of students from historically underserved populations, drawing upon three decades of research that underscores "the value of bilingual education and emphasizes the connections between radicalized cultural history and language" (p. 78). School administrators and faculty members must look past traditional forms of social and cultural capital and reconsider policies and practices that perpetuate what Bourdieu (1977) feared—education perpetuating societal inequities.

The power of social capital. Classical models of sociology fail to consider that society, on its own, may stand in the way, or put up barriers that impede the socialization of children and adults from minority or low socioeconomic backgrounds (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2011). Classicalists view the world through middle-class or Eurocentric lenses for which opportunities or resources are easily accessible (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Yet, the neglected consideration is that the middle class or Eurocentric social groups do not have to learn how to negotiate the social system at play and conflict with it because they are *the* social system. However, social groups that are neither middle class nor Eurocentric must learn to negotiate a social system that is unfamiliar to them and at times contradictory and conflicting with their own culture's established

social order (Boykin, 1986; Phelan, Davidson, & Yu, 1993). This dichotomy, coupled with Stanton-Salazar's (1997) view of education, may prevent a child whose family did not encourage schooling from being noticed by school officials or being seen as having talent. Stanton-Salazar argued that liberal sociologists' overemphasis on individual talents fails to consider the exclusionary nature at play in society against certain groups. Stanton-Salazar asserted that social groups that are not middle class and primarily minority find themselves part of an exclusionary circular web of power and subordination that is engineered to reproduce the status quo along race, gender, and class lines.

Through an examination of social network structures, Stanton-Salazar (1997) attempted to expose societal exclusionary factors at play, particularly in education institutions or systems. The road to power and oftentimes privilege is paved by social networks, which are accessible for use only with the requisite "educational experience that is strategic, empowering, and network-enhancing" (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p. 4). Such an education can "produce attitudes and activate behaviors that are particularly conducive to network building and maintenance" (Cochran, Larner, Riley, Gunnarsson, & Henderson, 1990, p. 303), thus expanding a student's network potential. If accessing the middle-class freeway is by way of empowering and intentional education (Stanton-Salazar, 1997), then one presumes schools are teaching the requisite skills. However, research from the past few decades suggests that an empowering education is not prevalent in predominantly working-class schools in urban or metropolitan areas. Citing research from contemporary sociology, Stanton-Salazar drew a connection among education, networks, and the future realization of adults and the degree of variance to coveted resources; in other words, resources brought a wealth of opportunities and privileges and that society has misplaced an exorbitant emphasis on individual aptitude, motivation, and achievement. This connection,

although intricate, has the power to reproduce existing social inequalities (Bourdieu, 1977). In other words, some groups can access the freeway while others cannot (Stanton-Salazar, 1997), which by its very nature acts as a barrier to social mobility by creating an exclusionary mechanism in the existing social order.

Familial agents. Parental influence has been found to be the most predominant predictor of college enrollment (Hamrick & Stage, 1995, 2000, 2004; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999). Kern (2000) reinforced this finding in her study of urban high school students from historically underserved populations who did not have college educated family members, concluding that encouragement by parents was the strongest influencer in students' aspirations to attend college. Kern's study was validated by a subsequent study by Villalpando and Solórzano (2005) that linked the value of education by parents of color and their children's postsecondary options. The aspiration to attend college is also a powerful form of capital described by Yosso (2005) as "aspirational capital" (p. 78). Gandara (1982, 1995) found evidence of aspirational capital in how Chicana/o parents maintained high hopes for their children's future even if they did not have the means to actualize or materialize their hopes by allowing or encouraging their youth to reach for the stars, metaphorically speaking. Like many parents, Chicana/o parents' hopes or aspirations for a better life for their children equate to better job opportunities, and education is perceived as an essential vehicle to achieve those means.

Institutional agents and support. The underlying concept of social networks is social capital: The "relationships with institutional agents, and the networks that weave these relationships into units" that people act upon in exchange for resources (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p. 8). Stanton-Salazar (2011) later refined his definition of social capital "as consisting of resources and key forms of social support embedded in one's network or associations, and

accessible through direct or indirect ties with institutional agents" (p. 1067). The key point to highlight is that relationships with institutional agents are natural, daily occurrences (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2011) that many people take for granted and the most common form are school educators, staff, and leaders. Like economic capital, social capital can build over time, generate returns, be transformed into other means or forms of capital, and be reproduced (Bourdieu, 1986). Access to this type of capital is problematic, particularly for children who do not have direct access to nonfamilial agents and whose very existence depends upon family agents and education institutions. A lack of social capital may prevent a child from accessing requisite resources that will provide for a rich and prosperous future (Bourdieu) or aid a child in succeeding in school, attaining a position in society, and accessing opportunities to enhance her/his social development (Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

One common form of an institutional agent to which all children have access is the teachers, school leaders, and school personnel. These school, or institutional, agents can provide social support or institutional support that will aid children in becoming "consumers and entrepreneurs within the mainstream marketplace" (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p. 10) and, in particular, schools. According to Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, and Fernandez (1989), school officials can provide students with a second chance at either developing or stimulating motivational attributes not previously learned before judging students' aptitude or work product. Middle-class youth and families take for granted that they are rooted in social networks rich with institutional support and regularly rely on their institutional relationships to achieve outcomes in schools (Stanton-Salazar). For working class or marginalized children who do not have rich social networks, institutional agents are can change their life for the better or worse (Stanton-Salazar) because the agents can decide whether or not to share knowledge (Sennett & Cobb,

1972). Should they so choose, they can strategically place students in social networks wealthy in resources to combat systemic forces (Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard, & Lintz, 1996).

Schools and their agents, therefore, provide a critical component to students' considerations of postsecondary opportunities, particularly for students from historically underserved populations because they face extraordinary challenges that may inhibit their success in school and life due to forces beyond their control (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2003). These forces, institutional or ideological, are potentially destructive for disadvantaged youth (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2003) because of the cognitive, psychological, and physical realities (Spina, 2000) at play in schools, communities, and society at-large based on a dominant culture that historically has not valued the language, culture, and history of minority groups (Valenzuela, 1999).

Structural school barriers and the opportunity gap. Many researchers have concluded that school and curricula negatively influence the college and career readiness for students from historically underserved populations. Academic resources that affect the postsecondary options of students include the school curriculum and access to college preparatory academics (Lucas & Good, 2001; Solórzano & Ornelas, 2004; Teranishi, Allen, & Solórzano, 2004) and the academic rigor of the school attended (Gardner, Ritblatt, & Beatty, 2000). In addition to the various forms of institutional support available, Stanton-Salazar (1997) argued that the provision for "institutionally sanctioned discourses [is a] prerequisite for participation in networks that yield intuitional supports necessary for success in school and society" (p. 12). Such discourse is a form of knowledge transmitted by the dominant group with the potential to reproduce social inequality (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2011). Students from historically underserved populations may face this predicament in one of two ways, or both: (a) they do not interpret the knowledge accordingly or

find meaning or relevancy to their own life experience, and/or (b) they rely on school agents to bestow or teach relevant discourse (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2011).

This potential manifests when children bring to school "cultural knowledge, primary discourses, and accumulated information that exist in households and neighborhoods" (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p. 13) that does not match the school's discourse or funds of knowledge. Middle-class children most likely do not encounter this predicament because the academic world is built upon the cultural and linguistic knowledge of White, middle-class communities (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Boykin, 1986). Middle-class children often find themselves with a competitive advantage in school, as their cultural and social capital more readily matches the school's funds of knowledge (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Furthermore, classroom teaching, instruction, and behavior validate middle class, cultural, and linguistic knowledge and "builds respect and appreciation for dominant culture" (Stanton-Salazar, p. 13) by middle-class children.

In order for students from historically underserved populations to access the school's curricular materials, teachings, and classroom repertoire, they must first acquire the dominant group's cultural logic and then use it within the institutional setting (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Delpit, 1988; Gee, 1989). This process is called *decoding* (Stanton-Salazar, 1997) and once the behavior is observed by school agents they subsequently share or transfer more content knowledge to the students and provide other requisite support to further aid their academics (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). Delpit (1988) describes decoding as the "culture of power" (p. 282) and enumerates its five fundamentals as they relate to the classrooms, educators, and students and the privileges associated with the dominant ideology:

1. Issues of power are enacted in classrooms.
2. There are codes or rules for participating in power; that is, there is a "culture of power."

3. The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power.

4. If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier.

5. Those with power are frequently least aware of—or least willing to acknowledge—its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence. (p. 282)

Yet, the reality is that educators fail to promote this agenda and teach the requisite decoding skills research has found are necessary to provide for long-term school success (Delpit; Shields, 2004).

School organizational practices such as ability grouping and tracking also deny some students the requisite funds of knowledge that would allow them to decode the academic world for themselves (Oakes, 2005). These practices further cement the concern that schools and their agents do not exist to engage students in academic success (Oakes, 2005). In the end, the power of institutional agents can be far reaching, should they elect to provide forms of institutional support and empower historically underserved students with decoding skills. Acknowledging the difficulties students from historically underserved populations must overcome to access the knowledge in schools highlights the need for schools to critically examine their structures, policies, and practices to not deny children the opportunity to learn (Boykin & Noguera, 2011).

For historically underserved students, aspirations of college decline due to a "lack of academic preparations" (Bergerson, 2009, p. 4), lack of understanding what it means to go to college, and/or knowledge about how to access information about postsecondary options (Hossler, Schmidt, & Vesper, 1999; Morgan, 2002). According to Bergerson (2009), White students from middle- and upper-class families are better prepared for postsecondary education because they have access to multiple forms of capital, which assists them not only in accessing

the necessary academically rigorous coursework but also in knowing how to learn about and apply to postsecondary institutions.

Students who rely on schools to provide some forms of capital actually may be at a disadvantage. Perna and colleagues (2008) asserted that resources available to high schools are related directly to the socioeconomic level of the students they enroll. For example, Solórzano and Ornelas (2004) found that schools attended by high proportions of students of color, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, students speaking languages other than English, or students from urban communities typically do not have sufficient financial resources to offer advanced placement courses, which research has highlighted as positively influencing higher education enrollment. Furthermore, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and historically underserved populations access another indicator of college readiness, advanced mathematics courses, less frequently than do their White or middle-class counterparts (Adelman, 2006; Dalton, Ingels, Downing, & Bozick, 2007). The lack of exposure to rigorous academics further limits access to postsecondary options for students from historically underserved populations (Hurtado, Inkelas, Briggs, & Rhee, 1997), as "college talk" is less likely to occur in low-level courses. This lack of access to a rigorous curriculum, researchers argued, "leads to a loss of talent" over the course of students' lives (Hurtado, Inkelas, Briggs, & Rhee, 1997, p. 62).

The lack of high school resources for students from historically underserved populations is further compounded by their dearth of information about postsecondary options. This predicament, compounded by insufficient funding for high quality and rigorous courses and infrastructure, such as counselors and teachers to guide and assist students with postsecondary options, hinders the academic and economic potential for students from historically underserved populations. Bergerson (2009) found that the two essential indicators of college preparation,

coursework and access to information, are inequitably distributed to students based on race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Barriers in school, whether academic or consultative, can inadvertently deny students from historically underserved populations an equitable education that can free them from societal forces that hinder their social mobility and economic opportunities.

Research highlights how cultural and structural forces impede or affect the achievement of students in school (Valenzuela, 1999; Yosso, 2005); however, some scholars believe that in the intersection between cultural and structural forces lies the answer to improving the academic performance of historically underserved students (Cairo, 2012). Opportunity gap scholars (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Fine, 2004; Noguera, 2007) believe that focusing on concrete, underlying obstacles to accessing high quality schools and instruction shifts the focus of achievement away from blaming students and their families. Specifically, the opportunity gap is the space between having unequal educational opportunities and the difference in achievement among groups of students who do not have access to quality education (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Fine, 2004; Noguera, 2007). Examples of unequal education opportunities include, but are not limited to, the lack of qualified or experienced teachers and their unequal distribution within schools and districts, insufficient educational funding, inadequate school resources in racially isolated schools or schools serving disadvantaged groups of students, overcrowded schools, lack of school counselors, and high teacher turnover rates (Cairo, 2012). However, shifting the focus to structural obstacles within schools that inhibit academic excellence for all students derails excuses that student achievement is caused by outside factors (e.g., family, language, or class; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Fine, 2004; Noguera, 2007; Shields, 2004). Furthermore, this

perspective empowers educators and educational leaders and redirects their focus on factors that are within the control of educators (Shields, 2004).

Focusing on the factors that educators and school leaders can control (e.g., teaching and learning) ensures that children's socioeconomic backgrounds, whether privileged or disadvantaged, are not intensified in school and inadvertently "deny poor children the opportunity to learn" (Boykin & Noguera, 2011, p. 186). Close examination of school practices has uncovered policies or structures that researchers have linked to the opportunity gap, in essence denying some students the opportunity to learn (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). One common practice in schools is assigning the highest quality teachers to teach the advanced courses and high-achieving students (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). This practice occurs in an environment where trust and authority mean different things to uneducated and educated parents, poor and wealthy parents, and parents of low-achieving and high-achieving students (Boykin & Noguera). According to Boykin and Noguera, well-informed parents and parents of high-achieving students would immediately speak to school authorities if their children were being taught by teachers with questionable credentials or less experience whereas poor parents trust the school's authority in teacher assignments.

A second practice occurring in schools is the "dumping grounds" of special education and English Language Learner classrooms (Boykin & Noguera, 2011, p. 187). Unfortunately, both groups of students become even more marginalized as they continue to be labeled over the years in place of receiving high-quality instruction and interventions that are closely monitored to ensure academic growth and possibly an exit strategy (Boykin & Noguera). A third practice occurring in schools is disciplining students of color, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and low-achieving students more frequently than their counterparts (Gregory,

Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). In many schools, data will reveal similar student patterns in achievement and discipline reports and yet, these students are the neediest and most vulnerable and miss more teaching and learning time than their counterparts because of detentions and suspensions (Boykin & Noguera). Noguera (2008) found that the students who are disruptive or defiant are also academically behind and disengaged in the classroom. A lack of active learning in a classroom either because of an inexperienced teacher, low-quality instruction, lack of adequate interventions, or disciplinary actions denies students opportunities to be engaged in learning, which research cites as the most important factor to raising the achievement levels of all students, but in particular at-risk students (Borman & Overman, 2004; Boykin & Noguera; Tucker et al., 2002; Wenglinsky, 2004).

The Role of School Principals

The role of a school principal is complex and challenging as principals are charged to increase student achievement, meet demands of standards based accountability, lead teachers and staff, improve instruction all within local context of school and community with diminishing resources and monies. At the same time, principals are asked "to ensure that every learner—in whatever learning environment that learner is found—has the greatest opportunity to learn, enhanced by the resources and supports necessary to achieve competence, excellence, independence, responsibility, and self-sufficiency for school and for life" (Scott, 2001, p. 6). To achieve Scott's (2001) mission or goal we need school leaders to become change agents and challenge the longstanding social inequalities that exist in schools (Foster, 2004) and "understand their ethical and moral obligation to create schools that promote and deliver social justice" (Grogan & Andrews, 2002, p. 250). Without equity and the assurance by school leaders

to serve all students well with unlimited access and encouragement—our schools and leaders are simply reinforcing the status quo and political rhetoric.

Numerous studies have documented and described the negative and/or inequitable circumstances many of our public school children face on a daily basis in schools (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Kozol, 1991, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). In particular, studies have found that students of color, students of low socioeconomic status (SES), students who speak languages in addition to or other than English, and students with disabilities have lower achievement test scores and experience low teacher expectations and resource allocation than White, middle-class students (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olsen, 2001; Banks, 1997; Delpit, 1995; Ortiz, 1997). This dichotomy between who is succeeding academically and equitably and those who are not runs counter to the mission of America's public education system: "assuring access to equal education opportunity for every individual" or Horace Mann's (1848) vision of education as a universal equalizer. Scholars have documented the success of schools where students, regardless of background, are meeting high academic standards and closing achievement gaps among diverse student populations (Comer, 1994; Oakes, Quartz, Ryan, & Lipton, 2000; Reyes, Scribner, & Scribner, 1999; Riester, Pursch, & Skrla, 2002). Unfortunately, the research literature also highlights the opposite—the failure of many schools to equalize or reduce achievement gaps (Jenks & Phillips, 1998; Kozol, 1991; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). It is this predicament, the existence of schools failing to meet the academic needs of all students that leads us to examine the role of school leaders and in particular school principals.

Recent studies have found a significant relationship between principals and the overall effectiveness on their schools and student outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998, 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Leithwood & Louis, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003; Marzano, Waters,

& McNulty, 2005; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). A study funded by the Wallace Foundation found that leadership ranked second out of a list of school factors that influenced student learning; first place was teacher quality (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). This finding reinforces reviews of empirical research wherein the direct and indirect effects of leadership on student outcomes is educationally significant, albeit small (Creemers & Reetzig, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). After controlling for student intake measures, Creemers and Reetzig (1996) suggest in their study that in student outcome, leadership accounts for about 10-20% of the variation when all school-level variables are taken into account (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). When juxtaposed with a study by Hill (1998), a third of the variation in student "achievement" explained by classroom "factors" (environment) continues to support the leadership research agenda linking successful leadership to education reform and student learnings (Leithwood et al., 2004).

A more recent study by Waters and colleagues (2003) found that by influencing and improving the teaching and learning practices of teachers, principals can increase student achievement. Their study, a meta-analysis commissioned by Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) found that if a principal "demonstrated abilities in all 21 responsibilities (identified by 66 leadership practices) by one standard deviation" (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 3), an average principal could expect a 10 percent increase in student test performance. In other words, Waters et al. found the relationship between leadership and student achievement to be statistically significant with an average effect size of .25. Although the relationship between the principal and student outcomes is indirect (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2004), the effect is not deemed less important

(Hallinger & Heck, 1996b). Nor is the effect less influential because leaders do not affect change on their own, but through others—the value is in understanding leadership practices and behaviors (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Specific leadership behaviors, on their own, have been linked to increasing or affecting student achievement (Cotton, 2003; Hallinger, 2005; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Leithwood et al., 2008; Marzano et al., 2005; Nettles & Herrington, 2007; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004; Waters et al., 2003).

In multiple reviews of educational leadership literature on the effects of principals, Hallinger and Heck (1996a, 1996b) concluded that school contexts factors must be considered when studying principal leadership. Specifically, school context factors include: "student background, community type, organizational structure, school culture, teacher experience and competence, fiscal resources, school size, and bureaucratic and labor features of the school organization" (Hallinger, 2005, p. 14). In order to lead, a principal must consider, understand, and respond to school context factors because schools change, as do their needs (Hallinger, 2005). This "integrative model of educational leadership" (Hallinger, 2005, p. 15) requires leadership to be viewed as a "*mutual influence process*" (emphasis in original, p.15).

Leithwood and colleagues (2004) describe successful leadership as "contingent" (p. 10) on its school environment or contexts. Specifically, they break down the contexts into three categories: organizational context, student population, and policy context, and argue that successful leadership is contingent upon the context thus may look or act differently. This idea runs counter to conventional wisdom of leadership models "that attempt be all things to all leaders" (p. 10). For instance, an urban principal may be more of a direct, top-down leader than a principal in a suburban setting. High school principals rely on their department heads for curricular knowledge, whereas elementary principals may know just as much about curriculum

as their teachers. Principals in large schools rely on professional development to influence or model instruction instead of directly with teachers in small schools. With regard to diverse student populations, the principal's role may shift to being a researcher as they struggle to determine for example, what form of instruction, grouping practices, class size, or outside resources or agencies will increase with student achievement while providing a supportive, learning environment. Last, but not least, principals grapple with the political nature of their district, city or state in terms of learning standards, accountability demands, and school funding and resource allocation (Leithwood et al.). The leadership challenge put forth by Leithwood and colleagues is to develop or train school leaders with the flexibility/capacity to pull out of their leadership toolbox the appropriate/requisite approach, style, or practice needed at the moment or context and not rely on just one model or style.

Leadership for Social Justice

In this section I discuss the need for social justice leadership practices as the organizational model and practical approach to improving postsecondary opportunities for students from historically underserved populations; this is where a gap appears in the literature. Although it is a developing field of research in education leadership, scholars and researchers have begun filling the gap in Leadership for Social Justice. Marshall and Ward (2004) and Theoharis (2004) expanded the theory of social justice leadership or Leadership for Social Justice to real-life examples by investigating day-to-day lived experiences and practices of urban school leaders who embodied social justice ideologies, concluding that urban principals firmly believed that promoting equity and social justice was fundamental to improving the education of marginalized and historically underserved students. Building upon this foundation, my study sought to understand whether social justice ideologies influenced the philosophy of urban

principals as they prepared secondary students for postsecondary opportunities, in college or careers, and specifically how they built upon the cultural assets students from historically underserved populations brought to school.

Historical perspective of social justice in education. It is important to provide an overview of the historical evolution of social justice in education to examine its influence in supporting structures and polices for students from historically underserved populations. Social justice in education in the United States dates back to the common school era when proponents of the common school movement debated whether the foundation of schools should be based on the belief of assimilation and meritocracy or cultural and linguistic respect (Tyack, 1993). As an early nation, promises of assimilation, equity, and social mobility were made to American Indians, Mexican Americans, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and African Americans and yet, the issue of race plagued those promises and interfered with the educational opportunities for their children (Williamson, Rhodes, & Dunson, 2007). During this era, schools were "deliberately segregated by White communities and school boards" (Williamson et al., 2007, p. 196) according to the assimilability of each respective group, with subpar and second-hand education for non-White students.

From 19th to the 20th century, the nation's racial and social hierarchy moved away from the color of one's skin and assimilability to inherited, intellectual traits, as the societal definition of Whiteness evolved (Williamson et al., 2007). According to Terman (1916), creator of the intelligence quotient, White individuals not born in America and individuals of color had mental defects that required a different or special educational setting that was suited for the type of work or labor they could intellectually manage. Examining this idea from the perspective of American psychologists at the time, it was

> assumed that intelligence was largely inherited, and developed a series of specious arguments confusing cultural differences with innate properties. [American psychologists] believed that inherited IQ scores marked people and groups for an inevitable station in life. And they assumed that the average differences between groups were largely the products of heredity, despite manifest and profound variation in the quality of life. (Gould, 1981, p. 157)

The continual marginalization of non-Whites and their inability to access White privileges fueled the resolve among minoritized groups to strengthen their segregated schools and build upon their language and culture (Williamson et al., 2007). During this period, and prior to desegregation policies enacted by the United Stated Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), minoritized groups used schools to reinforce and strengthen their cultural assets and equalize the education landscape for their children (Williamson et al., 2007).

As the United States entered the industrial era and cities expanded, new immigrants and unemployed workers flooded the nation's increasingly urbanized centers in search for jobs. The challenges faced by emerging cities acted as a catalyst for differentiation of instruction and curriculum in urban schools (Oakes, 1983) as educators sought to meet the myriad needs of rural, poor, immigrant, and upper-class students. One proposed solution to meet the needs of increasingly diverse schools was the implementation of a vocational education curriculum (Katz, 1971). The Boston, Massachusetts superintendent of schools, Edwin Seaver, believed that manual education was the solution to his city's problems in 1893, which he attributed and associated with the increasingly diverse city youth (Lazerson, 1971). By 1910, vocational training in schools was a coordinated effort by businesspersons and manufacturers to train future skilled laborers (Becker, 1982). For poor and immigrant children, vocational education was believed to instill the ethic of hard work, discipline, and labor skills (Oakes, 1983). For rural children, vocational education was created to expose rural children to agriculture as a means of launching a modern era of farming, to entice future farmers away from urban centers, and to

provide sustenance during the country's industrial era (Cremin, 1964). Progressive reformers heralded these efforts as a means to "democratize high school education" and provide "equal educational opportunity" to all based on their inherent interests (Oakes, 1983, p. 330). Yet, according to Oakes (1983), democratizing high school or providing equal educational opportunities was not the end result. Vocational efforts were meant to train and market future workers, make schooling applicable to the daily lives of students, and fill the void for students who could not relate to academia.

Vocational training became a mainstay in our public schools with funding provided by the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917 (Oakes, 1983). A succession of federal legislation ensued that required state and local governments to match federal funding for training or skills-based learning programs to prepare students for work on farms, in trade industries, or in factories and later under Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy the focus shifted to providing job training to residents in low-income communities (Epperson, 2012). The Smith-Hughes Act evolved into the Vocational Education Act (VEA) of 1963 and expanded skills-based learning programs to employment training or vocational education programs in business, like finance and accounting (Epperson, 2012). By 1976, VEA was expanded to include provisions for vocational education for bilingual and disabled students (Epperson, 2012). VEA was later reauthorized as the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act (Perkins) in 1984 and expanded its reach to preparing a more highly skilled labor force in addition to providing equal opportunity in the labor market to disadvantaged or at-risk youth (Epperson, 2012). In 2006, Congress expanded the focus of Perkins to incorporate academics into career and technical training; the current iteration, Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Grant (Perkins IV) highlights the

necessary connection between secondary and postsecondary education in order for young adults to be prepared for high-skill labor and high-wage employment (Epperson, 2012).

Although this brief historical perspective does not justify the wealth of literature and extent of the debate surrounding social justice efforts in education, my intent was to shed light on the struggles of educators and school leaders from the beginning of our nation's education system in educating students from historically underserved populations or for which English was a second language. This overview also provides a historical perspective to the issues that continue to plague secondary schools: offering a stratified educational system in high schools that provides a rigorous curriculum for high-achieving students in a college or career track and a general or vocational track, with less challenging coursework and lowered expectations for students who are perceived to be low achieving. The latter option conflicts with the impetus of Perkins IV which schools, districts, or even states may or may not subscribe to while also producing negative economic consequences with regard to employment opportunities, earning income, creating wealth, living longer and healthier lives, and home ownership for students that not have the requisite knowledge and skills (Belfield & Levin, 2007; Wilson, 1996).

The racial composition of college preparatory tracks and vocational or career academies in today's comprehensive high schools provides a glimpse to the unresolved struggle of today's educators and school leaders—the role of race, class, and language in education that by many accounts is socially unjust (Oakes, 1983, 2005; Oakes & Guiton, 1995). Historically, Black, Hispanic, and students from low SES backgrounds found themselves in low-level or remedial courses in racially mixed comprehensive high schools while White and Asian students enrolled in schools' honors or advanced placement courses (Oakes, Gamoran, & Page, 1992). Documented disparities by race in advanced level math (precalculus or calculus) courses

completed by White, Black, Hispanic, and American Indian students between 1982 and 2004 were found after reviewing high school transcripts collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (Dalton, Ingels, Downing, & Bozick, 2007). Despite substantial increases by all racial groups in the completion of pre-calculus or calculus as the highest mathematics course in high school, gaps between White and Asian students and American Indian, Black, and Hispanic students persisted. Between 1982 and 2004, the percentage of black students completing advanced mathematic courses increased from 4% to 19% and Hispanic students increased from 5% to 22% while White students increased from 12% to 37% and Asian students from 30% to 57%. In other words, by 2004 the completion gap between Black and White students and Hispanic and White students was 18% and 15%, respectively, wherein the gap between White and Asian students was 20%. From a socioeconomic perspective, the completion gap in advanced mathematics courses by students in the lowest and highest quartile almost doubled between 1982 and 2004 from 18 to 35 percentage points, respectively (Dalton et al., 2007).

Defining social justice. Before delving into studies that highlight social justice leaders, I will define the ideology of social justice. I preface this discussion by heeding Dantley and Tillman's (2006) warning that defining social justice in education is dangerous because conditions in schools vary widely and are too complex to essentialize a definition. Furthermore, any one definition can potentially restrict its application, thus classifying social justice as theoretical in nature (Dantley & Tillman). Broadly, though, the focus of social justice is to understand "how institutional theories, norms, and practices in schools and society lead to social, political, economic, and educational inequities" (Tillman, 2002, p. 147). Given the widely contested and complex nature of social justice (McKenzie et al., 2008), identifying principles or

concepts of social justice is more useful, as those principles can be molded into definitions that grow naturally out of practice and everyday situations (Dantley & Tillman).

One example of this approach is evident in the work of Kincheloe and Steinberg (1995), who created a framework that organized principles or concepts of social justice education as just, democratic, empathic, and optimistic. This framework is particularly relevant to my study, as I argue that building college and career readiness for students from historically underserved populations based on their cultural assets is grounded in education that is just, democratic, empathic, and optimistic and led by a school leader whose inclusive practices blur the lines around race, ethnicity, class, and culture. Examining school practices and policies within Kincheloe and Steinberg's framework will allow for critical reflection and dialogue and shift schools and leaders away from "pathologizing practices and deficit thinking" (Shields et al., 2005, p. 3).

Just education. Marshall and Ward (2004) argued that "social justice means ensuring that laws for individual rights are observed so that access to educational services is available . . . [and] . . . finding ways to 'fix' those with inequitable access" (p. 534). Equitable access to a school's curriculum and programs based on the cultural, social, familial, academic, and life experiences of students is the cornerstone of Farrell's (1999) characterization of a just education. Farrell challenged schools to ensure that all paths for students led to college or career opportunities through a rigorous, challenging, and standards-based curriculum regardless of the student's background because all students need to grow up to live independently and productively. This challenge, however, is limited by social blindness and a worldview that is unaware of "how routine practices in schools benefit young people from dominant groups while disadvantaging those from oppressed groups" (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 32). Yet, it is not

surprising given that educators and school leaders often are separated geographically and socially from students living in poverty or residing in predominantly racial or ethnic neighborhoods that are not White (Beachum, 2011). Villegas and Lucas (2002) supported this notion with their findings that White educators and school leaders are deprived of the "day-to-day realities, concerns, interests, dreams, and struggles" (p. 31) of students living in poverty, in economically depressed neighborhoods, or in ethnic neighborhoods.

This form of institutional discrimination not only limits access to education but also highlights the privileges afforded to some racial and social groups under the notion of hard work, meritocracy, and individualism—three ideals that form the foundation of schools in America (Beachum, 2011). Yet, these same ideals often restrict access to education for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, students from historically underserved populations, and students who speak languages other than English whose values and cultural capital may be conflicting and contradictory with the dominant, White culture of schools.

Democratic education. Ideally, by critically examining social blindness and addressing questions of equitable access for all students, school organizations will inadvertently account for the disequilibrium of power and privilege in schools and communities (Delpit, 1988; Shields, 2004). Although schools mirror society, the goal of education should be to improve the social and economic outcomes of students and not reinforce their current social/economic standing (Bourdieu, 1977), regardless of their background. Furthermore, as teachers work to prepare students to live independent and productive lives, to contribute to society and their neighborhoods, and become active participants in the democratic process, students' daily school experiences must mirror these outcomes. A democratic society is one of the people, for the people, and by the people; yet, many voices are overshadowed or silenced because of race, class,

privilege, and power (Delpit, 1988; Shields, 2004). For example, parents and families from low socioeconomic backgrounds, from racially marginalized groups, or who speak languages other than English often are barred from participating in the schooling of their children because they do not feel welcomed, capable, or understand the rules of engagement and must be taught how to participate (Delpit, 1988; Shields, 2004). Goldfarb and Grinberg (2002) expanded upon this notion by combining the democratic process with their ideals of social justice in education to alter practices "that militate against full participation of members of a community in the democratic process by actively engaging in reclaiming, appropriating, sustaining, and advancing inherent human rights of equality, equity, and fairness in social, economic, educational and personal dimensions" (p. 162).

This dilemma translates to the classroom as well, wherein some students are left out of the game of school because they do not know or were never taught the rules of the game (Delpit, 1988). Building upon Delpit's case studies, Shields (2004) argued:

> if all students are to negotiate schooling successfully, if pathologies of silence are to be eliminated, it will be necessary to provide some students with direct teaching of the rules and processes so that they may participate fully and actively in their own learning. (p. 124)

Addressing pathologies of silence in classrooms will allow students to take responsibility for learning and critically participate in the construction of knowledge (Giroux, 1997; Shields, 2004) as if they were acting as citizens in a democratic process. If students are to function intellectually in schools, then they must be "given the opportunity to challenge disciplinary borders, create pluralized spaces from which hybridized identities might emerge, take up critically the relationship between language and experience and appropriate knowledge as part of a broader effort at self-definition and ethical responsibility" (Giroux, 1997, p. 263).

Empathic education. *Nice* and *caring* are terms often used in education to describe teachers and leaders in school systems. The trouble, though, with this description is the potential danger lurking behind the intention: pity. A student or parent may confuse the nice or caring teacher with one who sympathizes, excuses, enables, or simply does not expect completion of an assignment, for example, because of the student's financial, familial, residential, cultural circumstances, or background. Noddings (1984) challenged this notion by describing an educator or education grounded in the ethic of care and relationships. In other words, the act of caring, not the emotion, requires an active relationship between two people: the person caring and the person being cared about. The point of contention, however, occurs when the cared about party does not believe or perceive she/he is cared for, thus negating the notion of a caring relationship (Noddings, 1984). A student whose familial, cultural, or financial background is not understood or valued by a teacher or leader will not feel cared about and will not be able to establish an educational link with the teacher. Without caring relationships, learning becomes a passive, meaningless, activity mostly accessible to students with prior knowledge and skills, thus leaving behind students who do not have background knowledge.

Schools and classrooms centered around the ethic of care would consciously and critically assess and acknowledge the backgrounds of students and form connections with all students so that learning is not withheld or out of reach for some students. Many educators, in particular those geared toward the ideals of social justice, are keenly aware that "learning takes on meaning when embedded in the reality of caring human relationships" (Shields, 2004, pp. 124-125). Building upon Nodding's ethic of care, MacKinnon (2000) found that the ideals of care not only are applicable and crucial to learning in the classroom but also throughout the

school because relationships among students, parents, communities, and teachers are necessary to tie together the curriculum and pedagogy of the school and enact learning.

Optimistic education. Shields (2004) asserted that children's opportunities in life are limitless when educators combine social justice values with excellence in teaching and learning for all students. Success in school translates to liberties in life wherein an education is "the apprenticeship of liberty—learning to be free" (Barber, 2001, p. 12). Yet, societal and school organizational structures interfere with the apprenticeship of students, particularly those marginalized by society through deficit thinking and academic tracking of students by race or class in schools (Oakes, 2005; Valencia, 1997). The optimism of opportunities lies in the knowledge that can lead to postsecondary opportunities, whether college or career, by centering schools around the needs of students and ensuring active participation and success in school by all students so they can enjoy the fruits of liberty.

Social justice leaders. The argument that a fixed definition of social justice cannot be codified (Dantley & Tillman, 2006) also was discussed by Bogotch (2002), but with a caveat—a definition could not be essentialized prior to putting into practice social justice concepts or principles. In other words, social justice principles can be molded into definitions that grow naturally out of practice and everyday situations. Bogotch argued that leaders who redirect educational resources in schools to alter and intervene in oppressive and power-delimited practices or programs would in fact be putting social justice principles in action, thus actively defining and activating social justice. An example of such an approach is outlined by Conley's (2010) seven principles of college and career readiness in secondary schools. The outcome, or definition that transpires, suggests that schools or programs are created for and based on the diverse needs of students; the aftermath produces a new reality with outcomes or conditions

social justice leaders seeks to create (Bogotch). From a theoretical perspective, social justice leadership is an appropriate lens to examine and understand practices in schools because at its core it "interrogates the policies and procedures that shape schools and at the same time perpetuate social inequalities and marginalization due to race, class, gender, and other markers of difference" (Dantley & Tillman, 2006, p. 31). Broadly, though, social justice leadership is informed by critical theory that explores and examines power dynamics within economic, political, and social landscapes for beneficial and detrimental purposes (Dantley & Tillman, 2006).

The social justice framework of just, democratic, empathic, and optimistic education envisioned by Kincheloe and Steinberg (1995) can be used as a "holistic litmus test" (Shields, 2004, p. 124) to reflect upon and guide a school leader's daily practice. Taken one step further, Foster (1986) argued that a social justice framework also requires leaders to look beyond daily practice or daily life and endeavor to change the conditions at hand. Merging these ideas, McKenzie et al. (2008) identified three goals for social justice leaders as they attempt to change the education conditions of marginalized or oppressed students: (a) increase the academic achievement for all students, (b) teach students to become critical consumers and citizens, and (c) create schools and classrooms that are diverse and inclusive. These goals fall within Kincheloe and Steinberg's social justice framework of just, democratic, empathic, and optimistic education. Increasing the academic achievement of all students lends itself to equitable access of a school's curriculum and/or programs based on the needs of all students (just), at the same time ensuring all students and families can participate in the game of school and life (democratic), within safe, inclusive, and caring relationships (empathic) while providing an apprenticeship to

all students that lies in the knowledge that can lead to postsecondary opportunities and ensuring all students enjoy the fruits of liberty (optimistic).

The need for empathy and practical aspects of social justice leadership by diversifying leadership practices and considering alternative perspectives that embody care as well as gender, critical race, modern, and multicultural theories was highlighted by Larson and Murtadha (2003). These inclusive and diverse perspectives are critical for social justice leaders, according to Riehl (2000), as they promote inclusion of all students in school practice, teaching and learning, culture, and the community-at-large. In other words, a leader may find that her/his efforts of inclusive practices inside a school and within the school's community may create a new leadership practice, one centered on social justice principles (Riehl, p. 71). Sapon-Shevin (2003) also argued that by not including all students in educational settings, the ideals of social justice could not be realized. Shields (2014) declared:

> A socially just learning environment is the pre requisite for enabling all students to achieve to their full potential and attain a high-quality education. A focus on social justice is the way to assist students to make sense of the content they are learning and to take their places in a world that still calls out for equity and inclusion for all. (p. 328)

Building upon Sapon-Shevin's (2003) framework, Theoharis (2004) conceptualized his own social justice-oriented focus for principals or school leaders and the development of a social justice leadership matrix. According to Theoharis, a social justice principal will "advocate, lead, and keep at the center of their practice and vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically marginalizing factors in the United States" (p. 8). This conceptualization of social justice framed the focus of a qualitative study in which Theoharis identified seven urban school principals whose daily actions modeled social justice as well as addressing marginalizing practices in their schools. Theoharis found that the urban principals

firmly believed that promoting equity and social justice was fundamental to improving the education of marginalized students.

A metaphor of a t-shirt was used by Theoharis (2008) to describe the differences between social justice leaders and good leaders, whereas the former is dyed and the latter is silk-screened. Just as "it is impossible to separate the color from the t-shirt, . . . with [social justice] principals it is impossible to separate the social justice work from who they are and from the rest of their position—as is with their passionate leadership" (Theoharis, p. 20). On the other hand, good leaders or leaders wearing silk-screened t-shirts can complete the tasks of desegregating schools, incorporating new reforms, and creating schools that on the surface embody social justice principles, but all these actions are apt to quickly fade or wear off like a silk-screen on a t-shirt that has been washed multiple times because the efforts of the leader are task-based and not encompassing social justice principles (Theoharis). Throughout my study, I used this analogy to examine the practices of urban, high school principals as they structure their practices and their school policies to build upon the cultural assets students from historically underserved populations bring to school in preparation for postsecondary opportunities.

Schooling is a wide social construct wherein learning, teaching, interacting with others, and leading occur instantaneously and simultaneously—all within the school walls. Yet, what occurs inside of a school is linked to the social, political, and cultural construct of families, children, and the community at-large. School is more than learning to read, write, and complete arithmetic or logical reasoning problems—schools in the 21st century also teach, inform, or evoke concepts of power, hope, risk, courage, promise, social justice, and liberation (Shields, 2010b). Freire (1998) argued, "that education is not the ultimate lever for social transformation, but without it transformation cannot occur" (p. 37). The magnitude of Freire's argument weighs

heavily or encompasses the role of a school leader as she/he is empowered to provide a schooling experience/education for all children.

The caveat, however, is in how the school leader, or in this case, a school principal, creates a school environment wherein all children, regardless of their social, cultural, political, or financial backgrounds are taught and learn to the best of their ability while meeting accountability measures. Transforming the lives of children through education as envisioned by Freire (1998) within a social realm that encompasses the school and community at large requires a leadership model that links academic achievement, social justice, and equity to school leadership. I incorporate transformative leadership theory as an extension to the theoretical foundation of the work of school leaders as they should be "creat[ing] learning contexts or communities in which social, political, and cultural capital is enhanced in such a way as to provide equity of opportunity for students as they take their place as contributing members of society" (Shields, 2010b, p. 572).

According to Shields (2010b), transformative leadership holds "the most promise and potential to meet both the academic and the social justice needs of complex, diverse, and beleaguered education systems" (p. 562). Transformative leadership theory asks our school leaders to evoke questions of justice, democracy, opportunity, and (in)equitable practices for all students while encouraging, empowering, and promoting academic achievement for all students individually and collectively (Shields). Numerous scholars have investigated the theoretical construct of transformative leadership (Astin & Astin, 2000; Anderson, 2004; Brown, 2004; Dantley, 2003; Shields, 2003, 2009, 2010a; Tillman, 2005; Quantz, Rogers, & Dantley, 1991; Weiner, 2003) based on early conceptual models of leadership described as transformative (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Foster, 1986). Empirical studies have also been published (Glanz,

2007; Hoffman & Burrello, 2004; Kose, 2007; Marshall & Olivia, 2005; McLaughlin, 1989) using the terminology of transformative leadership yet with "wide" variations in meaning (Shields, 2010b), however, few studies have examined transformative leadership according to its pure, theoretical interpretation or understanding. Theoharis (2007) began to fill this void in the literature and investigated practices of transformative leaders and its effects on how schools can change and meet the needs of all students when school leaders consider how student performance and student behavior are linked to a social justice ideology (Shields, 2010b). Theoharis, however, did not use the phrasing of transformative leadership in his scholarship and instead used the phrase 'leadership for social justice' but his conceptual construct closely mirrors transformative leadership theory (Shields, 2010b).

Shields (2010b) provided a historical narrative on the evolution, confusion, development, and refinement of transformative leadership theory in education by examining literature on leadership and transformative practices in education. Shields also discussed a study wherein she backward mapped seven major themes of transformative leadership, as evidenced by the literature, to a large data set of school leaders, who defined themselves as social justice educators. From the data set, Shields chose two principals whose diverse schools in Illinois (according to race and socioeconomic status) demonstrated high academic achievement, based on standardized state exams. In addition, these two principals "introduced a number of changes to ensure not only that the school was 'making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)' but that there was also wider and more equitable change in the school" (p. 561). Shields argued these principals provided "preliminary" evidence of "actualizing" transformative leadership theory as they took "explicit steps to change the goals and climate" (p. 582) of each of their schools:

1. a combination of both critique and promise;
2. attempts to effect deep and equitable changes;

3. deconstruction and recognition of the knowledge frameworks that generate inequity;
4. acknowledgment of power and privilege;
5. emphasis on both individual achievement and public good;
6. a focus on liberation, democracy, equity, and justice; and
7. evidence of moral courage and activism. (p. 562)

The principals in Shields' study showed that the theory of transformative leadership was possible, not too idealistic, and that although transformative practices were not widespread there is a potential or promise that the practices can and will provide a more just and equitable education for all students. Shields (2014) refined the seven explicit steps of transformative leadership identified above by adding an eighth step, "an emphasis on interdependence, interconnectedness, and global awareness" (p. 333), thus creating the eight tenets of transformative leadership. Shields (2014) cited an outcome in Barrett's (2012) study to illustrate her eighth tenet; specifically how the school principals in the affluent schools studied "denied the extent of their privilege and wealth, always comparing their school to one down the road that had something they did not have" (p. 335). Shields (2014) argued that it given the school context and leadership in Barrett's study, it would be difficult to expect that the students would come to understand the relationship between wealth, privilege, and power and its relationships to the larger world surrounding them.

In a dissertation study, Barrett (2012) built upon Shield's (2010b) research and investigated how school leaders in affluent communities understood, experienced, and addressed the tension between achieving outcomes for students (private good) and the purpose of schooling (public good). Through co-intentional conversations with seven elementary school principals and critical, phenomenological methodology, Barrett learned that the practices and beliefs of the principals were shaped and influenced by the dominant values of community-at-large and led

them to focus on student outcomes of achievement, attainment, and individualization. The principals did struggle with the balance between their professional practice in an affluent community and their democratic belief in schooling and justice-oriented ideals such as equity and inclusion. This dichotomy between private/public good and tension in the lived experiences of the principals in the study should have resulted, according to Barrett, differently or struck a different balance according to transformative leadership theory (Shields). However, Barrett used the opportunity to highlight how transformative leadership theory can provide a structure for the principals to incorporate transformative practices moving forward in the schools and community and further advance the democratic ideals of public school. Barrett presented the structure as six stages of implementation of successful transformative leadership practices: transformation, recognition, investigation, appreciation, connection, and action. By working through this transformative structure, Barrett argued that school leaders can begin to deconstruct knowledge and belief frameworks and open the dialogue on how power and privilege may prevent a justice-oriented approach to schooling, inclusion, and equitable access to public education. According to Shields, "transformative leadership begins with questions of justice and democracy; it critiques inequitable practices and offers the promise not only of greater individual achievement but of a better life lived in common with others" (p. 2).

Shields (2010b) concluded that there are three common elements that are central to transformative leadership theory: "the need for social betterment, for enhancing equity, and for a thorough reshaping of knowledge and belief structures" (p. 566). Out of this interpretation and review, Shields linked transformative leadership to social justice given their common goals of breaking down frameworks that lead to inequity and disadvantages and reshaping belief structures with justice-oriented focus. Although my study did not set out to explore principals,

their practices, or their schools through the lens of transformative leadership theory, I would be remiss to not include the theory in my discussion.

A College and Career Framework

One plausible solution for social justice leaders to consider when improving upon the college and career readiness pathways of students from historically underserved populations is to consider Conley's (2010) four-dimensional model, based on 20 years of field research. This conceptual framework investigates the college and career readiness strategies of secondary schools through four dimensions: meta-cognitive abilities, subject-level knowledge, student meta-cognition and study skills, and an understanding of the postsecondary world. According to Conley, integrating these dimensions would improve the college and career readiness of students, which is not about the classes students take during high school, their grades or grade point averages, standardized test scores, or college entrance exam scores; in other words, the factors on which researchers traditionally have focused when defining college readiness. However, it is about the skills students learn "along with a set of work habits and self-knowledge not much different from what is required of a . . . baccalaureate program" (Conley, p. 5) that will prepare students for entry to universities, community colleges, training programs, or advancement in a career pathway. Conley's model stems from his definition of college and career readiness as

> the level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit-bearing course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate program or transfer to a baccalaureate program, or in a high-quality certificate program that enables students to enter a career pathway with potential future advancement. (p. 21)

With or without formal postsecondary education, all students should leave their secondary school with "the ability to select an occupation that does in fact have a career pathway associated with it rather than simply taking the first job that comes along" (Conley, 2010, p. 5). Conley based the need for this model on the premise that secondary schools have failed to work

for all students and have become more of a self-fulfilling prophecy for students defined by race, class, culture, and gender, thus reducing or limiting opportunities for students. In addition, Conley articulated a process to enrich secondary schools with social capital to break down access barriers to postsecondary education and/or careers. However, when Conley's model is examined within the framework of Leadership for Social Justice, a gap emerges as to how students "know," "think," and "act" (Conley, 2012, p. 2) in comparison to how educators and school leaders "know," "think," and "act."

The first prong of Conley's (2007) model refers to meta-cognitive abilities or "key cognitive strategies" (p. 5) that have been cited by postsecondary first-year course instructors as more important than subject-level knowledge. The five key cognitive strategies embedded in first-year college courses are "problem formulation, research, interpretation, communication, and precision and accuracy" (Conley, 2007, p. 34). These same strategies are equally important to students pursuing careers after high school, as they will be faced with new and challenging material and tasks that will require conceptual understanding (Conley, 2010). The second prong, subject level knowledge, or "key content knowledge" (Conley, 2007, p. 5), is supported by studies that cite that an understanding of the big ideas as the most relevant factor of college success next to being a good writer. Students also require "key learning skills and techniques," Conley's (2012, p. 2) third prong, such as meta-cognitive and study skills to be successful in the postsecondary landscape. These skills are independent of content knowledge, yet are equally important as students are assessed routinely on their understanding of content and completion of assignments or tasks. The last prong, understanding the postsecondary world or "key transition knowledge and skills" (Conley, 2012, p. 2), highlights the disparity between students of various socioeconomic statuses, race, or ethnicity and their ability to apply to college, secure financing,

and navigate the postsecondary academic and career landscape. Conley (2007) believed that high schools have yet to integrate these four dimensions and intentionally do not advance their development in their students.

Furthermore, Conley (2007) argued that adoption of his definition of college and career readiness and dimensions would lead to a set of metrics that would determine the preparedness level of students with "greater precision and across a wider range of variables and learning contexts" (p. 6). The metrics would provide schools with progress indicators, which students could access so they take control of their educational futures. The information would be invaluable to students as they consider their course selection during their high school years, supplement coursework, seek outside school resources to refine academic content or skills, explore extracurricular activities, or discuss aspirations or talents with teachers, counselors, mentors, or family members. In essence, this approach would shift students into becoming more active managers of their education versus being managed by adults who may or may not fully understand their potential (Conley, 2010) and affect their postsecondary future.

Using the four-dimensional model as a lens, Conley (2009, 2010) selected 38 secondary schools to investigate practices, programs, and beliefs that successfully led to college and career preparation for all students. These schools were chosen from 200 schools with a particular focus on schools serving students who would be the first in their families to attend college and wherein student demographics would not predict high performance on certain college readiness indicators (Conley, 2009, 2010, 2012). His findings were synthesized into seven principles for secondary school educators and principals to undertake in preparation for the college and career apprenticeship of students (Conley, 2009, 2010). Conley based the need for these principles on the premise that secondary schools have failed to work for all students and have become more of

a self-fulfilling prophecy for students defined by race, class, culture, and gender, thus reducing or limiting possibilities for some students.

Integrating Conley's (2009, 2010) college and career apprenticeship framework with the social justice framework of education by Kincheloe and Steinberg (1995) lends to a model for school leaders to consider when creating or evaluating a college and career readiness pathway built around providing all students a just, democratic, optimistic, and empathic education (Figure 2). Conley's (2009, 2010) first, fourth, sixth, and seventh principles mirror in practice Kincheloe and Steinberg's optimistic frame; Conley's third and fifth principles mirror the democratic frame. Conley's second principle mirrors the just frame. Kincheloe and Steinberg's empathic frame is seen as encompassing the entire model.

	KEYS TO COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS (Conley 2010, 2012)			
SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES THAT CREATE A COLLEGE AND CAREER APPRENTIESHIP FRAMEWORK (Conley, 2010)	Key Transition Knowledge and Skills "go"	Key Cognitive Strategies "think"	Key Learning Skills and Techniques "act"	Key Content Knowledge "know"
Principle 1: Create and maintain a college-going culture in school	●			
Principle 2: Create a core academic program aligned with and leading to college readiness by the end of twelfth grade				●
Principle 3: Teach key self-management skills and academic behaviors and expect students to use them			●	
Principle 4: Make college and careers real by helping students manage the complexity of preparing for and applying to postsecondary education	●			
Principle 5: Create assignments and grading policies that more closely approximate college expectations each successive year of high school		●		
Principle 6: Make the senior year meaningful and appropriately challenging	●			
Principle 7: Build partnerships with and connections to postsecondary programs and institutions	●			
SOCIAL JUSTICE FRAMEWORK (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1995)	**Optimistic**	**Democratic**		**Just**
	Empathic			

Figure 2. College and career model.

Conley's seven principles in action. The first principle Conley (2010) outlined is to "create and maintain a college-going culture in school" (p. 105). A college-going culture permeates in schools in which the mission or belief is to establish a postsecondary education and career goal for every student as well as preparing every student to be successful in whatever route they choose (Conley). According to Conley, high expectations for all students translates into practices that create a school schedule or program of study geared towards college with structures in place to ease the transition to the postsecondary world and not limited narrowly to only students who intend to enroll in college. The school's overall mission is of choice and opportunity and it is the belief and intentionality of the school's faculty and staff in preparing or enabling all students to seek postsecondary opportunities (Conley). Additional practices such as displaying postsecondary acceptance letters throughout the school, organizing school ceremonies to recognize student acceptance awards, requiring students to complete a minimum number of postsecondary applications, and organizing college fairs or visits were witnessed in many of Conley's case sites.

Structural programs such as freshmen bridge, academy, or campuses serve to orientate freshmen students to the school's college-going culture and mission while personalizing the learning environment around students' skill levels and interests (Conley, 2010). The personalization of freshmen year also is conducive to forming caring relationships with school faculty who will mentor and advise students throughout their high school career. In many of Conley's case sites, the role of mentors and advisors was not confined solely to school counselors, but was an expectation of all school faculty and staff. In other words, school faculty and staff members were trained and available to assist students with applying to postsecondary programs and completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. In many cases,

counselors were committed to the technical phase of the application and financing cycle through one-on-one student consultation, senior seminars, college fairs, and campus visits (Conley).

The rigorous curriculum of an advanced placement course is valued far more than potentially earning college credit, but for providing students with additional knowledge and skills needed for success in the postsecondary world (Conley, 2010). This is the message of Sammamish High School in Bellevue (WA), which recommends that all students enroll in an AP course. This mission requires a concerted school structure with multiple stakeholders actively reviewing and assessing student progress and overcoming barriers. For example, because many students were unable to afford the AP examination fee at Sammamish High School, a scholarship program was created for students eligible for free or reduced price lunch or if simply the family could not afford it. The structure in place at Sammamish links high school to the needs and demands of college and employers and aids in closing the gap between high school and life after high school (Conley, 2010).

The state of Illinois has made an attempt to close the information gap between high school and postsecondary opportunities by creating the Illinois Career Cluster Framework (Jankowski, Kirby, Bragg, Taylor, & Oertle, 2009; Figure 3). A career cluster model can provide students a multi-tiered approach to explore their interests, identify a career and the requisite education required for certification, and investigate postsecondary options and fulfill make "college and careers real by helping students manage the complexity of preparing for and applying to postsecondary education" (Conley, 2010, p. 117). Implementing the Illinois' Career Cluster within the high school is one way to orient students to postsecondary options and to begin transitioning students to adulthood by "exert[ing] some control over the ways in which their lives evolve" (Conley, p. 119).

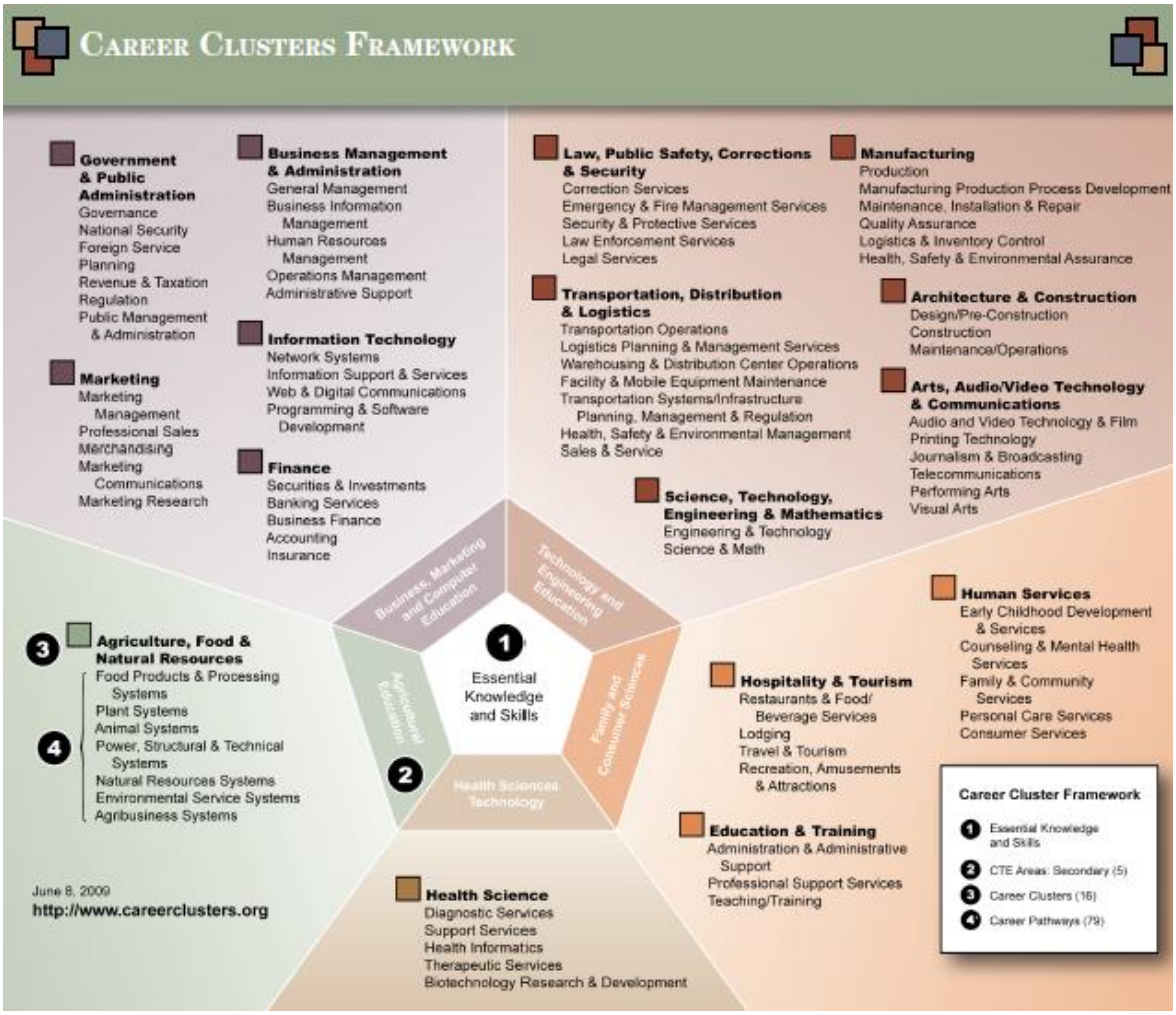

Figure 3. Illinois Career Cluster Framework.

In addition to orienting students to postsecondary opportunities, high schools need to adequately prepare students for college entrance exams such as the ACT or SAT and assist students in interpreting the results to identify possible career paths, education financing, and scholarship opportunities (Conley, 2010). Colleges and universities also find themselves offering special programs and services to retain and meet the needs of students who have been historically underserved in higher education. Offering cohort models, bridge programs, and targeted financial aid packages to historically underserved students in specific high schools is also an attempt to open and foster dialogue between high schools and postsecondary institutions

that traditionally have operated in isolation. The lack of vertical alignment between grades 9 and 14 or grades 9 and 16 is detrimental to the success of students in the postsecondary landscape and leads to a large number of students needing to enroll in remedial courses or not earning postsecondary degrees (Conley). The argument Conley made was for "deeper relationships [that] lead to bridging programs, teams of instructors that work across institutional boundaries, richer data sharing attempts to come to agreement on what constitutes adequate performance for college-ready students" (p. 128), not just college tours or college fairs. Furthermore, lack of alignment between secondary and postsecondary institutions, trickles down to students and may inhibit student success because they may not feel academically or socially ready for postsecondary training. This predicament was highlighted in Conley's research wherein faculty members in both secondary and postsecondary institutions were frustrated with the lack of student preparation in both of their classrooms as well as misconceptions about requisite knowledge and skills needed to be successful in each classroom.

College and postsecondary partnerships can provide historically underserved students in high schools with social capital that can broaden and shape their postsecondary future, but so can structured, academic internships or project-based seminar courses (Conley, 2010). Another Conley principle of college and career readiness is to "make the senior year meaningful and appropriately challenging" (p. 125) and not succumb to "coasting" senior year of high school. Students who fail to enroll in challenging courses in their senior year find themselves placed into remedial courses their first year of college and earning low grade point averages in entry-level courses (Conley). Given financial, societal, and educational challenges surrounding historically underserved students in postsecondary institutions, adding the burden of completing remedial

courses that in many cases do not earn students college credit, yet require payment, and earning low course grades may demoralize their spirits even further (Conley).

A summative principle Conley (2010) articulates to prepare students for college or career is to "create assignments and grading policies that more closely approximate college expectations each successive year of high school" (p. 121). Broadly speaking, high school programs of study should lay the foundation for postsecondary education, whether in a college, university, or technical school setting, by approximating the caliber and quantity of students' workload in a postsecondary setting (Conley). Progressively increasing students' educational experiences and expectations in a supportive environment over the course of their high school career can provide an adequate challenge and teach coping mechanisms students can use when they are on their own (Conley). For example, Conley found schools in which teachers benchmarked assignments to postsecondary readiness skills to determine student progress and gauge teacher expectations and/or gaps. In many cases, Conley also found teachers using research papers to mirror college assignments and expectations and challenged the efficacy of its use if teachers only increased the length of the paper over from grade 9 through 12 and not necessarily the criteria or substance of the research paper content.

Foundational to every school or learning institution is a core academic program. Conley's (2010) model describes the core academic program as "key content knowledge" (Conley, 2007, p. 5) and takes the model one step further by articulating a principle that requires a "core academic program aligned with and leading to college readiness by the end of the twelfth grade" (Conley, 2010, p. 109). In his case sites, Conley (2010) found schools not only aligning to state standards but also to college "course expectations, assignments, goals, and activities" (p. 109). The vertical alignment process of grades 9-12 was also combined with horizontal alignment by

grade level and subject in high schools (Conley, 2010). The horizontal alignment component is foundational to a school's college and career readiness structure because it creates and later identifies whether students are meeting baseline expectations and to account for adjustments or changes teachers need to make (Conley, 2010). Horizontal alignment will highlight also if expectations differ by student population or demographic (Conley, 2010). In addition, horizontal alignment is similar to conducting equity audits (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003) where student performance data and work products are reviewed to ensure course benchmarks are being met and/or consider how to improve teacher practice to improve student outcomes (Conley, 2010). Course alignment not only improves student outcomes or ensures proficiency of "key content knowledge" and "key cognitive strategies" (Conley, 2007, p. 5) but also ensures a cohesive school structure wherein content and strategies are not omitted which can be detrimental to some students because the school has a disjointed courses (Conley, 2010).

Summary

This chapter provided a review of literature that examined the role cultural and social capital played in closing the postsecondary opportunity gap in addition to providing a brief economic argument for providing all students to opportunity to learn. Specifically, the literature revealed the wealth of cultural capital or cultural assets students bring to school that can enrich their schooling instead of feeling marginalized or ostracized as being an "other." Next, the power of social capital in particular familial and community agents that push children to reach for the stars until they collide with structural school barriers that interfere with their opportunity to learn. However, institutional agents and their support networks can mitigate the barriers students from historically underserved populations experience in schools.

Leadership for Social Justice as a conceptual framework for school leaders was then introduced and examined. In the final section, I provided an analysis of Conley's (2010) college and career readiness conceptual model, which articulates a process to enrich secondary schools with social capital to break down access barriers to postsecondary education and/or careers. However, when Conley's model is examined within the framework of leadership for social justice a gap emerges as to how students "know," "think," and "act" (Conley, 2012, p. 2) in comparison to how educators and school leaders "know," "think," and "act." This gap, the focus of my study, focuses on institutional barriers that may inhibit or prohibit students from historically underserved populations to access the postsecondary landscape from the perspective of leadership practices of secondary school principals. Thus, in addition to meeting the needs of all students, there is a need to establish a college and career readiness framework that builds on or embraces the assets students bring to school to close the opportunity gap, empower, and prepare all students for jobs that will propel our future economy and meet the needs of their societal future.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This study sought to understand the practices and/or strategies high school principals employ to prepare students from historically underserved populations for postsecondary opportunities, in college or careers, while building upon the cultural assets students bring to school. This problem requires a research design that will deepen our understanding of the lived experiences and/or challenges urban secondary school principals may face in eradicating or critically examining barriers in their schools' structures and policies that may affect the postsecondary opportunities for students from historically underserved populations. The challenge, thus, for the education world is to look past traditional forms of social and cultural capital and reconsider school policies and practices that perpetuate what Bourdieu (1977) feared—education propagating societal inequities. This issue requires an "action agenda for reform" (Creswell, 2009, p. 9). As advocates and change agents for students from historically underserved populations, the goal is to improve the education landscape for historically underserved students through empowerment and collaborative efforts (Creswell, 2009). This paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) or worldview (Guba, 1990) lends itself to a qualitative approach as the study seeks to explore and understand leadership practices that have embraced cultural assets of students and families from historically underserved populations and empower students to reach postsecondary opportunities.

This chapter presents the research methodology of my study. This chapter also describes the study's design, participants, procedures, and analysis. In the design section, I explain why a qualitative case study approach was appropriate for my study. Next, I describe how I selected

participants for the study with a subsequent section detailing how I collected the data. The final section outlines how I analyzed the data.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed:

1. How does a high school principal advocate for and support students from underserved populations in accessing postsecondary opportunities in college and career?
2. What system or structures are in place to facilitate a college and career ready pathway for all students, but in particular students from underserved populations?
3. How do the school's faculty and staff build upon the cultural assets students from underserved populations bring to school as they and their families prepare for postsecondary opportunities?

Research Design

Seeking to make sense of the world through the experiences of individuals lends itself to qualitative research (Krathwohl, 2009; Merriam, 2009). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) noted that "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of meaning people bring to them" (p. 3). From a qualitative researcher's frame of reference, "reality is socially constructed" (Merriam, 2009, p. 8); thus, the knowledge to be gained from the world is not quantifiable or stable and cannot be observed from only one perspective (Merriam, 2009). From this constructivist perspective, the researcher seeks to understand the world in which individuals "live and work" (Creswell, 2007, p. 20) and develop meaning from the experience. This process of interpretation, or constructivism, draws upon the researcher's perceptions as she or he makes sense of how people understand and make meaning out of the world around them from multiple perspectives. Real-world or real-life problems provide qualitative researchers a better understanding of the world (Merriam, 2009).

From this broad definition of qualitative research, scholars define qualitative research by its characteristics. Marshall and Rossman (1999) characterized qualitative research as naturalistic, context-based, emergent, interpretive, and incorporating methods that are respectful of the study's participants and cognizant of the researcher's biases. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) described qualitative research as investigating topics that are full of soft data (e.g., descriptions of events, people, places, and discussions) that may develop a focus as data is collected. Merriam (2009) characterized qualitative research as inductive and focused on meaning, understanding, and process whereby the researcher is the study's collector and synthesizer of data and produces a very descriptive, rich, final product.

Employing qualitative research methods through a multi-site case study allowed me, as the study's "primary instrument" (Merriam, 2009, p. 15), the opportunity to gather soft data in a natural setting (a school in a large metropolitan area), about a context (principal leadership practices). An important strength of investigating multiple case sites and participants lies in "enhancing the external validity or generalizability" (Merriam, 2009, p. 50) of the study's findings. Miles and Huberman (1994) summarized the applicability of collective case studies as "looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can understand a single-case finding, grounding it by specifying how and where and, if possible, why it carries on as it does. We can strengthen the precision, the validity, and the stability of the findings" (p. 29). In addition, through observations and interactions with principals, school faculty members, students, and parents/legal guardians, I was able to document and richly describe the practices uncovered in both case sites. From this process, themes or concepts emerged that may inform or improve future practice in schools, school districts, and/or university teacher and leader preparation programs.

Process

Sample selection. I employed purposeful sampling to gain the most information about each case (Maxwell, 1998) in the metropolitan area of a large, Midwestern city and answer my study's research questions. Purposeful sampling is a "strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten from other choices" (Maxwell, 1998, p. 87). The power and challenge in this sampling strategy lies in the identification of cases that are "information-rich" (Patton, 2002, p. 230). The challenge of this strategy, however, can be superseded by identifying criteria that frames the study's problem and purpose (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Merriam, 2009).

Criteria for principals. The criteria for selection of high school principals were as follows:

1. have served as principal in her/his current school for at least three years;
2. believes all students must be college and career ready prior to high school graduation, in particular students from historically underserved populations; and
3. believes all students bring cultural assets to school that are incorporated into the school's culture and pedagogy.

***Criteria for schools*.** Upon identification of principals, state, district, and school data portals were reviewed to confirm the school met the study's criteria:

1. public high school in a metropolitan and/or rural area;
2. school demographics of a high proportion underserved students including, but not limited to Hispanic, Latino/a, Chicano/a, Black, Indian, or Pacific-Islander; and
3. serves grades 6-12, 7-12, or 9-12.

To determine the initial sample, I sought nominations of principals based on the study's criteria from school district leaders, university professors, and locally-based principal and administrator associations through an email communique. Six principals were identified during

the summer and fall of 2014. Each nominated principal was contacted through an email communique and a reminder communique with a description of the study's purpose, research activities, time commitment, and timeline. I also queried the nominated principals for their recommendations of other building leaders that met the study's purpose until a snowball or network sample is achieved (Krathwohl, 2009). Upon a principal's agreement to participate in the study, I conducted a search using state, district, and school data portals to confirm the school met the study's criteria. Upon confirmation, each principal was sent an email communique thanking her/him for their willingness to participate in the study and requesting a brief interview along with attachments containing the school district's research approval and the university's informed consent forms. I conducted a principal participant screener (Appendix A) adopted from Theoharis (2004) and McKinney (2010) in a brief 15-minute telephone interview to ensure the three nominated principal participants met the study's criteria. After reviewing the responses from the interviews, I selected two principals and their schools for my study.

Data collection. I obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to conduct my study in February 2013 (Appendix B). Next, I submitted my application and study proposal to the research and accountability office of each of the school districts I had chosen to participate in my study. Once my study was approved by the school district and prior to interviews and/or observations, I provided each study participant with a statement of informed consent and notification of their rights as the study's human subjects. To protect identities, each participating principal, school faculty member, student, and parent/legal guardian, and their school, were given pseudonyms. A copy of each informed consent form is found in Appendix C.

Data for each case study were acquired through principal interviews, separate focus group interviews with teachers, students, and parents/legal guardians at each school site, and several observations of the principals in meetings or in their respective schools during October 2014 and May 2015 with document review and analysis continuing through winter of 2015. In the sections that follow, I detail each of my collection methods and document review processes.

Interviews. To address my research questions, I conducted face-to-face semi-structured and informal interviews with each principal and focus group interviews of school faculty, students, and parents/legal guardians (Merriam, 2009). For the purpose of a qualitative study, interviewing allows the researcher the opportunity to document what cannot be observed (Merriam, 2009).

***Principals*.** Each principal was interviewed on three separate occasions ranging from 20-90 minutes. My first interview with each principal included semi-structured interview questions (Appendix D) to allow me the flexibility of acquiring data that was not anticipated (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Initial interviews were held at each principal's school for approximately 60-90 minutes. Follow-up interviews were conducted face-to-face or over the phone with email exchanges and or impromptu conversations at school events to allow the opportunity to cross reference data I gathered in my document review, focus group interviews, and/or observations. I digitally recorded each interview and transcribed the audio. I transcribed the digital recordings in a two-column format. This format served two purposes: To allow a space for my own analytical notes and for the participants, the right-hand column allowed a space for correction or changes upon their review for member-checking. Transcripts of each interview were sent to each participant for member checking (Merriam, 2009) in a password protected email file attachment.

School faculty members, students, and parents/legal guardians. After I interviewed the principal, focus group interviews were scheduled at each participant's school with three separate groups: school faculty members, students, and parents/legal guardians. Focus group interviews were conducted with semi-structured interview questions (Appendix E) and ranged from 45-120 minutes. Approximately five faculty members, eight parents/legal guardians, and seven students were interviewed at each school site. Each focus group interview was digitally recorded and transcribed. I transcribed the digital recordings in a two-column format. This format served two purposes: To allow a space for my own analytical notes and for the participants, the right-hand column allowed a space for correction or changes upon their review for member-checking. Transcripts of each focus group interview was sent to each participant for member checking, in a password protected email file attachment or postal mail, with a postage paid return envelope.

***Observations*.** The purpose of observing each principal in her/his school was to witness and record firsthand her/his practices in real time and to "notice things that may have become routine to the participants themselves, things that may lead to understanding the context" (Merriam, 2009, p. 119). Observations provided an opportunity to support the study's findings through triangulation and/or provide discussion points in subsequent interviews (Merriam, 2009).

In my study, I observed each principal in either meetings or during school walk-throughs on three separate occasions. Specifically, I observed the principals in a variety of settings: a faculty meeting, a professional development session, a parent leadership meeting, a meeting with their respective school's business advisory council, and a student leadership meeting. Prior to collecting data, I observed each principal in their school setting to garner familiarity with the school's culture, climate, and routines. Gaining entry to the schools also allowed me opportunities to interact with faculty members and answer broad, general questions about my

purpose and interest in each school's activities as a way to establish rapport and trust with faculty members (Merriam, 2009). The observation protocol (Appendix F) I developed to gather data incorporated the social justice framework of education by Kincheloe and Steinberg (1995). I divided my observation log into four quadrants, each quadrant representing a lever in Kincheloe and Steinberg's social justice framework of just, democratic, optimistic, and empathic education. Within each quadrant, I noted behaviors or practices of each principal or participant group.

Prior to each meeting or observation, I asked each participant for informed consent to participate in the study. If an individual participant declined consent, their comments were not included in the field notes or transcription. At the start of each meeting/observation, I introduced myself as a graduate student investigating the practices of the principal. During observations, I was an observer; the group knew my role, but I did not contribute to the conversation verbally. I acknowledge, though, that this approach may have limited access to data, as the participants in the meeting or observation may have regulated their speech, thoughts, and actions based on my presence or body language (Merriam, 2009). I digitally record each meeting, if feasible and timely, and if participants provided their consent. In my field notes, I described each event with rich description of the participants, setting, physical space, and conversation so that a reader could feel as if she/he had attended (Merriam, 2009).

Document analysis. Throughout my study, I reviewed and examined documents that were voluntarily provided by the principals at each school site or available publically on school websites. One level of documentation involved school demographic and achievement data collected from the district or school site. A second level of documentation pertained to the school site's handbooks (e.g., student, parent, and/or staff), policies and/or procedures, curriculum,

communications, website, school improvement plans, curriculum maps, teacher lesson plans, meeting agenda and minutes, and advising/counseling daily activities and/or student sign-in logs.

Data Analysis

I employed an ongoing process of data analysis described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as the constant comparative method. Merriam (2009) described this process as the gold standard; otherwise "data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming" (p. 171). Miles and Huberman (1994) further noted that this process transitions "from the empirical trenches to a more conceptual overview of the landscape. We're no longer just dealing with observables, but also with unobservables, and are connecting the two with successive layers of inferential glue" (p. 261). In my study, data analysis occurred in two stages: case-specific and across both cases (Merriam, 2009).

The end result of the data analysis process was my study's findings, or the meaning derived from the data collected, observed, and analyzed. Merriam (2009) suggested that the meaning or findings derived from the data should answer the study's research questions. The challenge, however, in deriving meaning lies in "consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read" (Merriam, p. 176). The goal for the researcher, thus, is to find answers to the study's research questions in the data and then find "reoccurring regularities in the data" (Merriam, p. 177). This process generated categories that were used to sort and organize pieces of data that were notated as important pieces of information relevant to my study's research questions. This process is called coding and is highly inductive as the researcher is testing against new pieces of data or codes (Merriam). The process becomes deductive when the process shifts away from testing categories to confirming categories

when no new data emerges; thus, the researcher will "reach a sense of saturation" (Merriam, p. 183).

Merriam (2009) provided researchers a process for determining categories as well as checking for their relationship to the study. Merriam outlined five criteria to consider when developing categories from the data beginning with answering the research question, followed by categories that are sensitive, exhaustive, mutually exclusive, and conceptually congruent (p. 186). Next, Merriam tasked researchers with creating a visual representation of the categories to determine their fit, as well as purposely writing the study's purpose statement on the schematic as a reminder to answer the study's research question/s.

Guba and Lincoln (1981) supported the category determination process by adding that unique categories may emerge from the data that either suggest "areas of inquiry not otherwise recognized" as well as "provide a unique leverage on an otherwise common problem" (p. 95). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) and Guba and Lincoln highlighted the possibility that the study participants may suggest or determine a category. The number of times a topic or piece of information is mentioned is of significance as well as the number of people the data reveals suggest the same topic (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Finally, the number of categories the researcher identifies is also a consideration of the data analysis process. If too many categories are identified, the analysis process may be "too lodged in concrete description," thus the "level of abstraction" (Merriam, 2009, p. 187) is minimal. Creswell (2007) suggested that by the end of his analysis he usually synthesized his data into five or six categories from an initial set of 25 or 30 categories. I allowed my initial set of codes to emerge naturally from the data or study participants and were numerous. After completing my second case, patterns emerged and I began to categorize my initial codes, while adding additional codes, until all my data was codified.

I used a computer-based file folder and spreadsheet, Microsoft Excel, to organize and sort the data I acquired from each study site. An electronic folder was created on my computer for each school site with respective files for participants' screener and interview responses, observations, and document review field notes. I used Microsoft Excel to analyze the data according to my conceptual framework and paper to sketch and link themes/codes.

Credibility

Given the human nature element in qualitative research, researchers must consider credible strategies of validity to authenticate their findings. These strategies may include triangulation, member checking, adequate engagement in data collection, reflexivity, and peer review (Creswell, 2009; Krathwohl, 2009; Merriam, 2009). Triangulation occurred throughout my study through the use of multiple data collection methods and drawing comparisons in and across the datasets of all the cases. Member checking was another method I incorporated when interview transcripts were sent to the participants to clarify my transcriptions and their voices and experiences. I spent sufficient time in the field collecting data until a point of saturation occurred (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) or I when I began "to see or hear the same things over and over again, and no new information surfaces" (Merriam, 2009, p. 219). I also considered Patton's (2002) assertion that while in the field I *"look for data that support alternative explanations"* (p. 553, emphasis in original). In my case report of the study, I stated my "assumption, experiences, worldview, and theoretical orientation" (Merriam, 2009, p. 219) so that the reader understood my perspective, how I analyzed the data, and how I came to my findings and conclusions.

Consistency

As the researcher, I accounted for consistency so that the results of my study made sense in light of that data I collected (Merriam, 2009). This outcome is very different from reliability and a quantitative study because the findings cannot be replicated given the human element of the study's data set. Triangulation and researcher reflexivity (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) used in establishing credibility also accounted for the study's consistency. Another strategy I employed throughout my study was journaling or what Lincoln and Guba (2000) described as an audit trail. My journal allowed me the opportunity to review events, meetings, comments, observations, encounters, or my own thoughts "in the moment" to support my writing and data analysis. Incorporating multiple strategies of credibility strengthened my study's findings just as multiple data collection methods ensured consistent data.

Transferability

Another strategy to increase the trustworthiness of a qualitative study is to be able to transfer the study design and findings to another setting (Merriam, 2009). This outcome can occur if when the study's findings are written with "thick description of the sending context so that someone in a potential receiving context may assess the similarity between them and . . . the study" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 125). Thick, rich description was a strategy I incorporated in both the study's methodology and findings.

Ethical Considerations

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative study findings cannot be proven or conceptualized as a product because qualitative research is "holistic, multidimensional, and ever changing" (Merriam, 2009, p. 213). Shields (2007) expanded on the value of qualitative research:

> The strength of qualitative approaches is that they account for and include difference—ideologically, epistemologically, methodologically—and most importantly, as humanly. They do not attend to eliminate what cannot be discounted. They do not attempt to simplify what cannot be simplified. Thus, it is precisely because case study includes paradoxes and acknowledges that there are no simple answers, they can and should qualify as the gold standard. (p. 13)

Although qualitative case studies are created, investigated, and analyzed by a researcher, it does not mean that a researcher can or should selectively choose the data to analyze (Guba & Lincoln, 1981) or disregard her/his biases (Merriam, 2009). The researcher must account for ethical considerations in a qualitative study so that a reader can trust the study's procedure and findings and that "the author's conclusion 'makes sense'" (Firestone, 1987, p. 19). Furthermore, a reader must believe that the findings are "sufficiently authentic . . . that I may trust myself in acting on their implications? More to the point, would I feel sufficiently secure about these findings to construct social policy or legislation based on them?" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 178).

The integrity of a qualitative study is based on the credibility of the research. One standard of credibility stems from the researcher's "intellectual rigor, professional integrity, and methodological competence" (Patton, 2002, p. 552). Merriam (2009) stressed the importance of these qualities because the community at large must "trust that the study was carried out with integrity and that involves the ethical stance of the researcher" (p. 229). Throughout my interviews, observations, and document review I consciously reviewed my own ethical checklist, an extension of Patton's (2002) "Ethical Issues Checklist" to account for the following:

1. sensitivity to participants' privacy,
2. sensitivity about information divulged about students and staff,
3. sensitivity to student data,
4. embarrassing or unanticipated participant revelations or behaviors,
5. participants' façade of "best behavior" practices,

6. inappropriate student contact,
7. documentation of unethical practices,
8. misuse of data,
9. excluding data based on my own biases or assumptions,
10. failure to protect the anonymity of participants,
11. failure to acquire informed consent, and
12. failure to respect participant refusal to participate.

Summary

This chapter presented the methodology used in my study, the study's design, participants, procedures, and analysis. In the design section, I defined and discussed why a qualitative case study approach was appropriate for my study. Next, I described how I anticipated selecting the schools, principals, school faculty members, students, and parents/legal guardians. In a subsequent section, I detailed how I collected data, through interviews, observations, focus group interviews, and a review of documents voluntarily provided by the principal or publically available. The final section outlined how I anticipated analyzing the data.

Chapter 4

The Cases

In my study, I investigated the leadership practices of two principals in two high schools as they advocated and built a culture focused on college and career readiness for students from historically underserved populations, and to identify and describe the characteristics that they shared (Stake, 2005, 2006). In this chapter, I provide a detailed, holistic multi-site case study report with data collected between October 2014 and May 2015 at the schools located in the metropolitan area of a large Midwestern city. Through my data collection process I sought to understand how principals "live and work" (Creswell, 2007, p. 20) at each of their schools and then develop meaning from the experience. This process of interpretation, or constructivism, drew upon my perceptions as a former high school teacher, district administrator, immigrant student whose first language was not English, and the first student in my family to attend college, to make sense of how the principals understood and made meaning out of the world around them from multiple perspectives.

Throughout my study, I argued that building college and career readiness for students from underserved populations would be grounded in education that was socially just, democratic, empathic, and optimistic (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1995) and was led by a school leader whose inclusive practices blur the lines around race, ethnicity, class, and culture (Dantley & Tillman, 2006). Through my data analysis, four themes emerged about the leadership practices of the principals at both case sites: develop career pathways, create and engage corporate and education advisory boards in the school's curriculum and career pathway development, provide students with opportunities to further learning and career interests inside and outside the classroom, and

empower teachers and students to participate in and take responsibility for their own teaching and learning.

In the sections that follow, I describe each case and themes that emerged from my data analysis. I begin by providing an overview of each site (Table 1 and Figure 4) along with tables outlining school level indicators, demographic figures, and academic performance as measured by state achievement tests and ACT exams for each case. I did not include performance data from the PARCC administration because in the 2014-2015 school year, PARCC assessments were not administered to the entire high school student population; administrators were allowed to choose the subject areas and grade levels, per state education officials. Thus, 2014-2015 PARCC assessment data was not representative of the performance of the entire high school population. I next introduce each of the study's participants (Tables 2-3) before introducing their voices in the themes that emerged at each case site.

Table 1

The Cases: Bell and Orchard by School Level Indicators

Demographics	Bell	Orchard	State average
Total Enrollment	600	2,000	2,000
Average per pupil instructional spending (by district)	$10,000	$10,000	$7,500
Average per pupil operational spending (by district)	$15,000	$18,500	$12,500
Average class size	25	21	19
Average teacher salary (by district)	$70,000	$80,000	$60,000
Average administrator salary (by district)	$90,000	$120,000	$100,000
Students in families receiving public aid, living in substitute care, or eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches	51.7%	49.8%	54.2%
Students identified as English Language Learners	0.2%	7.4%	10.3%
Students who receive special education services	9.2%	13.2%	14.1%
Students who graduated within 4 years	91%	87%	86%

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Demographics	Bell	Orchard	State average
Students who are ready for college coursework (combined ACT score of 21)	46%	46%	45.6%
Students who are career ready			
Level 6 (foundational skills for 99% of jobs)	0.0%	0%	1%
Level 5 (foundational skills for 93% of jobs)	14%	22%	24%
Level 4 (foundational skills for 67% of jobs)	74%	59%	52%

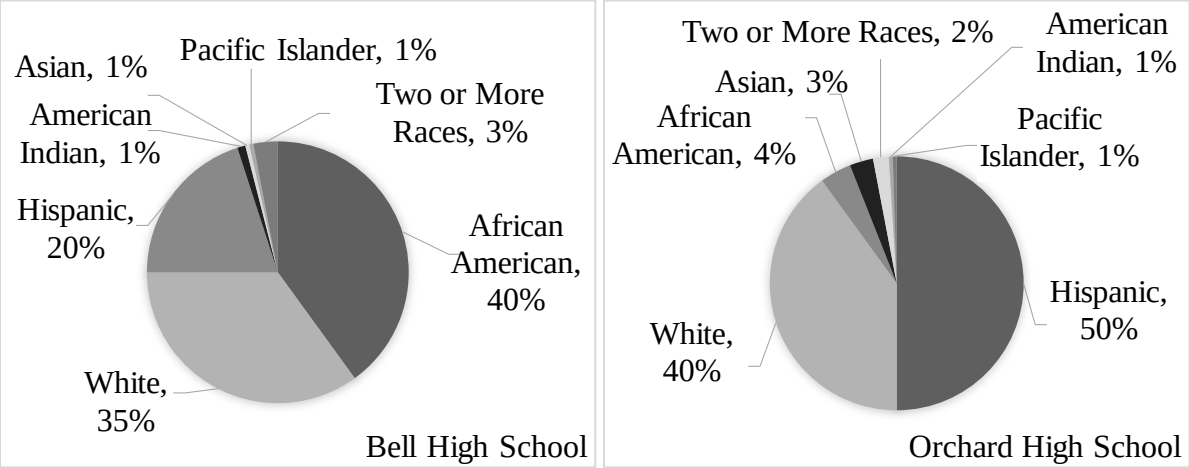

Figure 4. The Cases: Bell and Orchard student demographics.

Table 2

Case A: Bell Participant Profiles

Participant	Sex	Self-reported racial background	Role (Years of experience or age)	Highest education level attained (Students only: Identified their parent's education level)
Mr. Sandberg	Male	White	Principal (25)	Bachelor's Degree
Ms. Grace	Female	White	English teacher (18)	Master's Degree
Ms. Dawson	Female	White	Chemistry and Environmental Science teacher (22)	Master's Degree
Ms. Santo	Female	White	Co-taught English, Math, Science, and History; Testing coordinator (13)	Master's Degree
Ms. Wood	Female	White	Food Science (28)	Master's Degree
Ms. Banks	Female	African American	Agricultural teacher (5)	Master's Degree

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Participant	Sex	Self-reported racial background	Role (Years of experience or age)	Highest education level attained (Students only: Identified their parent's education level)
Mary	Female	White	Parent	Bachelor's Degree
Chaniece	Female	African American	Parent	Bachelor's Degree
Anna	Female	African American	Parent	Blank
Carol	Female	African American	Parent	Blank
Elizabeth	Female	Blank	Parent	Blank
Gary	Male	White	Parent	Blank
Susan	Female	Blank	Parent	Blank
Samantha	Female	Blank	Parent	Blank
Rani	Female	Middle Eastern	Student (18)	(Parent-Graduate school in USA)
William	Male	African American	Student (17)	(Parent-College diploma/Trades certification in USA)
Sean	Male	White	Student (18)	(Parent-Some college in USA)
Brittani	Female	African American	Student (18)	(Parent-Master's Degree in USA)
Lucas	Male	White	Student (17)	(Parent-Associate's Degree in USA)
Thomas	Male	White	Student (18)	(Parent-high school/some college in USA)
Elisa	Female	Hispanic	Student (17)	(Parent-high school in USA)
Pedro	Male	Latino	Student (18)	(Parent-high school in USA)

Table 3

Case B: Orchard Participant Profiles

Participant	Sex	Self-reported racial background	Role (Years of experience or age)	Highest education level attained (Students only: Identified their parent's education level)
Mr. Lyons	Male	White	Principal (9)	Master's Degree
Mr. Fields	Male	White	Networking teacher; Digital Literacy teacher (11)	Master's Degree
Mr. Evans	Male	White	Industrial Technology teacher (10)	Master's Degree

(continued)

Table 3 (continued)

Participant	Sex	Self-reported racial background	Role (Years of experience or age)	Highest education level attained (Students only: Identified their parent's education level)
Ms. Smith	Female	White	Digital literacy teacher; Consumer Education teacher; Entrepreneurship teacher (11)	Master's Degree
Ms. Adler	Female	White	Business and Technology teacher, Technical Support teacher, Entrepreneurship teacher (9)	Master's Degree
Dr. Thompson	Female	White	Director of Careers; Digital Literacy teacher (37)	Doctorate Degree
Emily	Female	White	Parent	High school
Agnes	Blank	Blank	Parent	Blank
Jane	Female	White	Parent	some college
Hillary	Female	White	Parent	Bachelor's Degree/CPA
Anya	Female	White	Parent	Master's Degree
Maria	Female	White	Parent	some college
Claire	Female	White	Parent	some college (3 years)
Margaret	Female	White/American Indian	Parent	some college
Amira	Female	White	Student (17)	(Parent-high school in Syria)
Claudia	Male	White	Student (17)	(Parent-Bachelor's Degree in Mexico and USA)
Dhalia	Female	Middle Eastern (Palestinian)	Student (17)	(Parent-Bachelor's Degree in Palestine)
Matthew	Male	White	Student (16)	(Parent-high school in USA)
Marco	Male	Hispanic	Student (16)	(Parent-4 year university in Mexico)

Case A: Bell High School

The district. Hamilton School District is located in a large urban city in the Midwest. The district is one of the largest in the state, educating approximately 400,000 students in 600 schools (approximately 100 high schools and 500 elementary schools). The student population is

racially diverse district-wide: approximately 50% Hispanic, 45% African American, 10% White, and 4% Asian. The district has identified approximately 87% of the students as economically disadvantaged and 18% as English Language Learners. District-wide, the principal and teacher demographics do not mirror the student demographics, with the exceptions of African American principals (approximately 44%). Table 4 provides information on the district's demographics. In the 2014-2015 academic year, 60% of the district's teachers held a master's degree or higher, and the average annual salary for teachers in the district was $70,000, which is higher than the state average teacher's salary of $60,000. The average salary for a district principal was $90,000, approximately $10,000 less than the state average.

Table 4

Case A: Student, Teacher, and Principal Demographics by District

Ethnicity	Student	Teacher	Principal
African American	45%	22%	44%
Asian	4%	4%	1%
Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%
Hispanic	50%	16%	16%
American Indian	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%
White	10%	52%	36%
Two or More Races	1%	2%	2%
Unknown	N/A	N/A	2%
TOTALS	400,000	23,000	500

The school. Bell High School (Bell) is located in a small neighborhood on the southwest side of the city, abutting the city suburbs. The neighborhood surrounding the school is dotted by brick bungalow homes on tree-lined streets; there is a scattering of homes that have been torn down and rebuilt in an updated, modern brick bungalow design. Churches (predominantly Catholic) and their parochial schools are nestled within the neighborhood, along with small city parks. The neighborhood is widely acknowledged as a safe place to live and raise a family; it is also known for being one of the city neighborhoods comprised of city workers, who are required

to maintain residence within the city's borders, including police and fire officials, public works employees, city hall officials, and school district central office administrators. The school campus consists of a 100-acre farm with a modern school building; barns; crop acreage; a tree orchard; pastures for horses, cattle, pigs, and turkeys; a golf course; and athletic fields. The principal, Ryan Sandberg, calls the school a "land lab." Although a public school, Bell has a magnet designation, which means an eligibility requirement must be met before students are selected through a computerized lottery. The eligibility requirement is a minimum NWEA MAP percentile of 24 in both math and reading; students with Individualized Education Plans (IEP) or students receiving bilingual services must have a combined NWEA MAP math and reading percentile that equals at least 48. Once all district-wide eligible students are identified, applicants are included in the lottery and chosen in the following order: (a) first seats are offered to siblings (sibling lottery), (b) next 40% of seats are offered to students who reside within a 2.5-mile radius of the school (proximity lottery), and (c) remaining seats are offered to students based on four socio-economic tiers calculated by the district according to property addresses. Six characteristics are used for tier determination: median family income, percentage of single-family homes, percentage of homes where English is not the first language, percentage of homes occupied by the homeowner, level of adult education attainment, and the achievement scores from attendance area schools).

The school's certified staff includes 40 teachers, two counselors, one curriculum coach, one principal, and one assistant principal. In the 2014-2015 academic year, teacher retention was 94%, and Principal Ryan has led the school since 2008 and after a racially divisive election by the school board. In the 2014-2015 academic year, Bell enrolled slightly over 600 students; approximately 40% African American, 20% Hispanic, 35% White, and the remaining 5%

comprised of students with other racial/ethnic backgrounds (Figure 4). A profile of the school is included in Figure 5. The student attendance rate for the school was 94% in 2014-2015 academic year with a 3% mobility rate, a chronic truancy rate of 16%, and a 1% dropout rate. Half of Bell students lived in families that received public aid, lived in substitute care, or were eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches. Nine percent of the student body received special education services, 0.2% of student population were identified as English Language Learners, and 1.0% of the student population may not have a permanent home or adequate living situation.

Total Enrollment	600
Average per pupil instructional spending in this district	$10,000
Average per pupil operational spending in this district	$15,000
Average class size	25
Students in families receiving public aid, living in substitute care, or eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches	50%
Students identified as English Language Learners	0.2%
Students who receive special education services	9%
Students who graduated within 4 years	90%
Students who are ready for college coursework (combined ACT score of 21)	48%
Students who are career ready	
Level 6 (foundational skills for 99% of jobs)	0%
Level 5 (foundational skills for 93% of jobs)	14%
Level 4 (foundational skills for 67% of jobs)	74%

Figure 5. Bell: 2014-2015 facts and figures.

Bell boasts a 90% graduation rate within 4 years and a 95% graduation rate within 5 years. Approximately 94% of freshmen were designated “on-track,” which is a metric used by the district to identify students who have earned five full-year credits and no more than one failing grade in a semester course of English, Math, Science, or Social Science. The metric supports research conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research that found a ninth-grade student is almost four times as likely to graduate from high school if she/he is “on-track” at the end of ninth grade (Allensworth & Easton, 2005). In addition, this metric can identify ninth-

graders who are not “on-track” or “at-risk” and provide them with appropriate interventions (additional tutoring, instruction, or individualized services).

Bell is unique in its curricular focus on agriculture and its career pathway design. Bell offers six career pathway options aligned to agriculture: finance, education, animal science, food science, mechanics, and horticulture. Career pathway decisions are determined during the students’ sophomore year after they have spent their first 2 years learning about each career pathway, within core subjects and career specific courses, and working 40 hours on the farm. As sophomores, students present a portfolio to an interview team consisting of Principal Ryan and one to two faculty members, describing their academic progress in all courses, the experiences they had working on the farm, their rotation experiences in each of the six career pathways, and their ranking of each pathway. The interview team questions students about their plans after graduation: Do they want to attend college, which college, what career interests them, what courses interest them. Students are asked to explain their career pathway rankings in light of all the information presented; the interview team wants to ensure the career pathway the student selects for their final two high school years mirrors their future plans. For example, a student who expresses an interest in becoming a doctor or nurse would find the animal sciences pathway particularly relevant given the focus in science or the student who expressed an interest in engineering would find the courses in the mechanics pathway relevant to their future engineering courses. During their junior and senior years, students’ schedules are set according to their assigned career pathways. At Bell, agriculture provides an umbrella or hands-on-experience that students could touch, feel, taste, see, and smell; it grounded the theoretical elements students learned in the classroom. Bell educators recognize that the majority of their students will not go into an agricultural focused career or degree path after graduation; however, they remain

confident that each student would find their area of interest within one of the six career pathways.

At Bell in 2014-2015, 48% of students were "ready for college coursework"; in other words, earning a composite score of at least 21 on the ACT assessment. Within the district, only 28% of students were identified "college ready" in comparison to 46% of students in the state. When ACT results are further analyzed according to ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks (English benchmark is 18, mathematics benchmark is 22, reading benchmark is 22, and science benchmark is 23), Bell students performed better than district students, but not as well as all students in the state except for the English subtest (Figure 6).

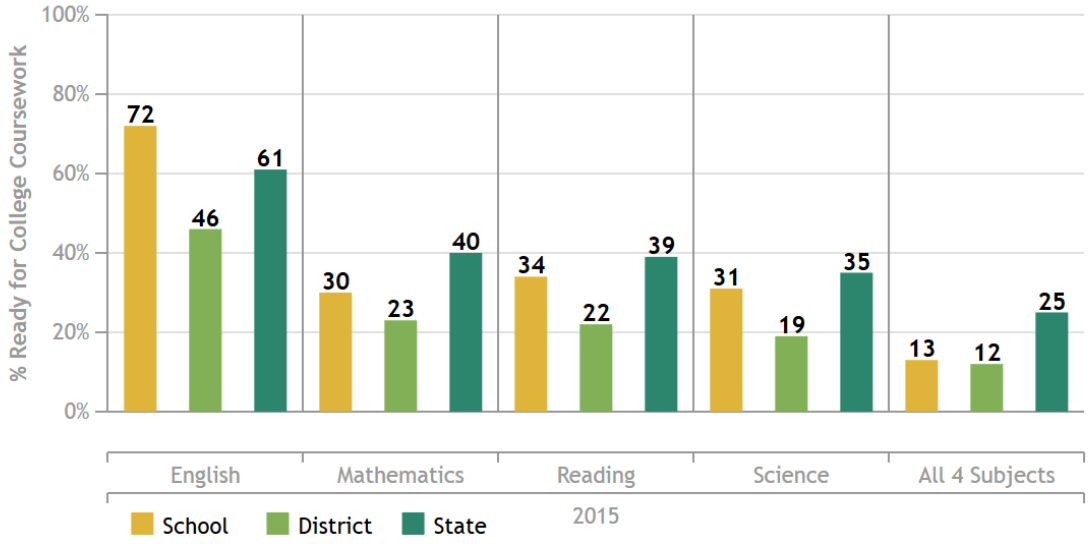

Figure 6. Percentage of Bell students ready for college coursework, according to ACT benchmarks, in comparison to overall district and state students.

In comparison to ACT scores, the state achievement examination measures 11th grade students' academic achievement according to the state's learning standards, or progress students make toward the learning standards, and assesses students' knowledge of applied mathematics and reading for information in a portion of the exam called ACT WorkKeys. Figure 7 provides a 5-year trend of the percentage of Bell students meeting or exceeding state standards on the

state's achievement examination as a composite score of reading and mathematics subtests in comparison to all students in the state. Figure 8 shows the composite score, over a 3-year period, by performance level of Bell students in reading, mathematics, and science.

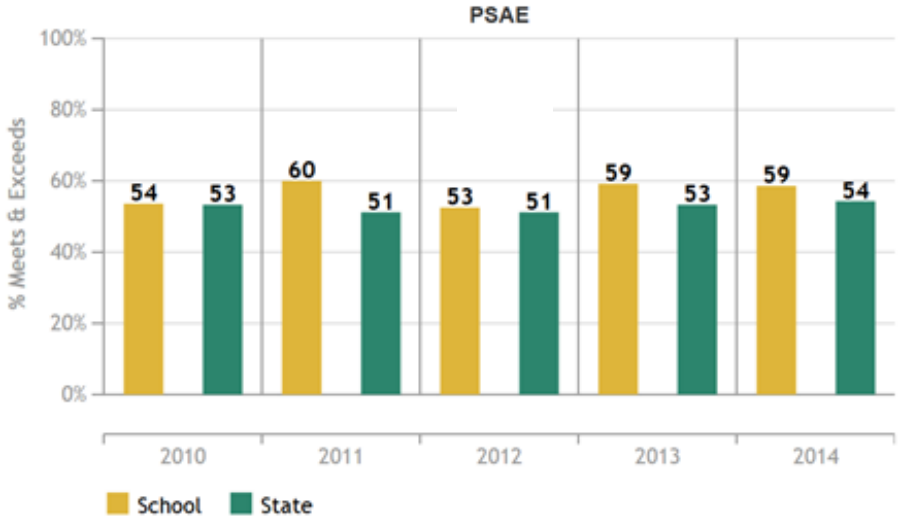

Figure 7. Percentage of Bell students meeting or exceeding state standards on state achievement examination, as a composite score of reading and mathematics sub-tests.

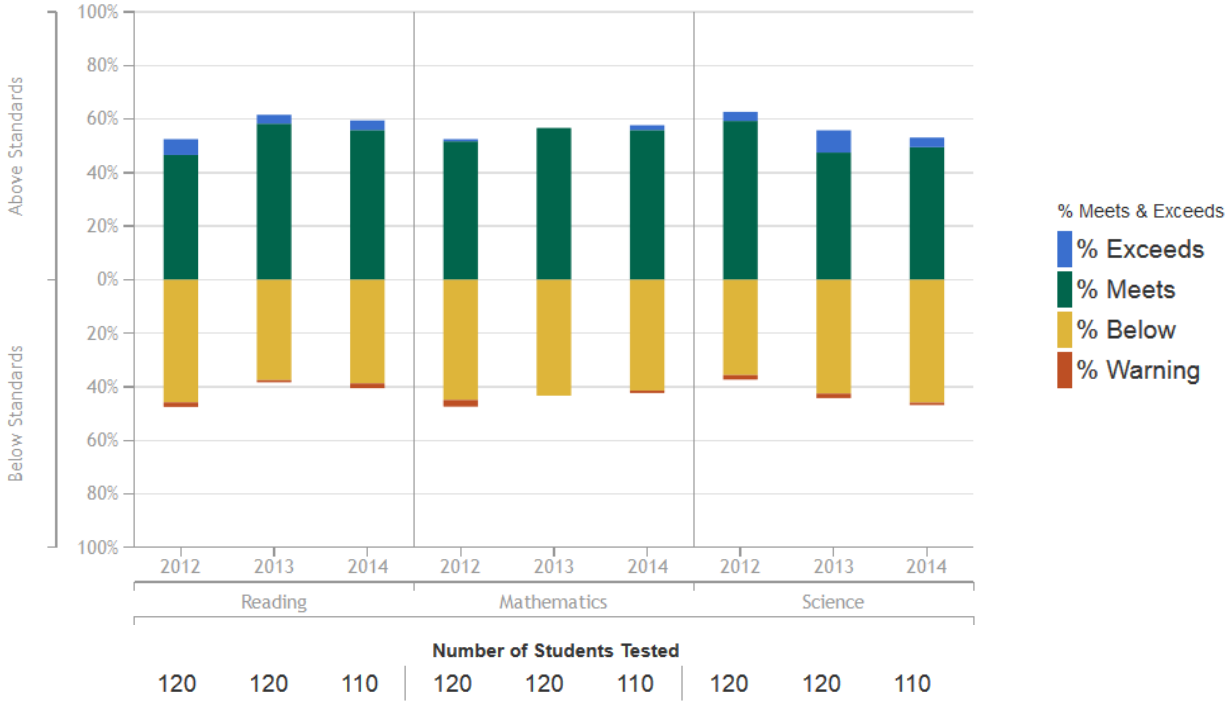

Figure 8. State achievement examination performance levels of Bell students in reading, mathematics, and science over a 3-year period.

Examining state achievement examination performance levels of all students by content (reading, mathematics, and science) is important when discussions shift to closing or reducing achievement gaps among student subgroups; in the case of Bell among the three largest student demographics (White, Hispanic, and Black students; Figures 9-11).

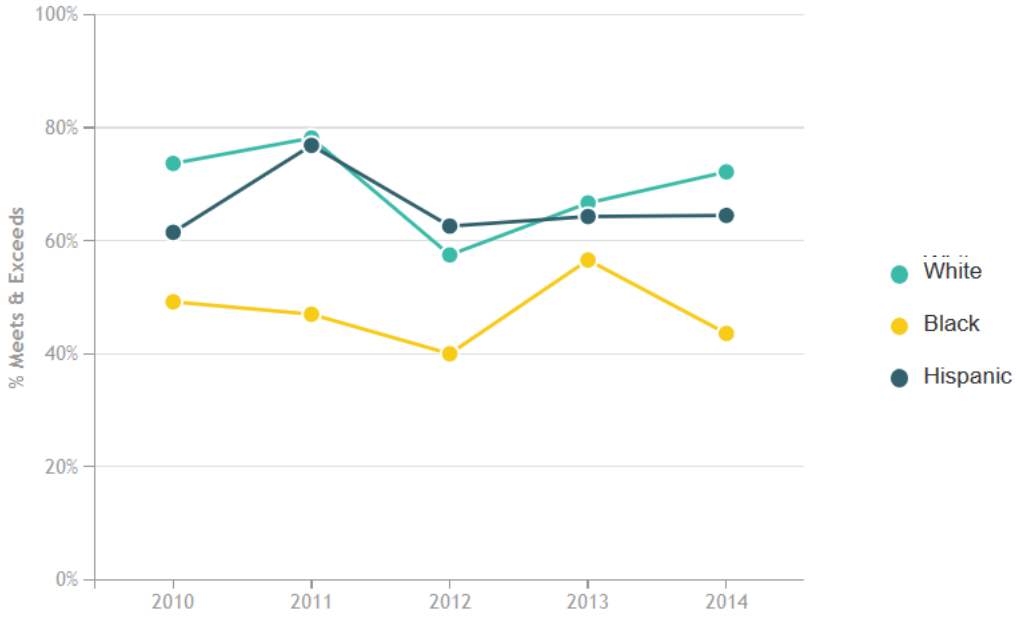

Figure 9. State achievement examination reading performance levels of Bell students over a 4-year period, by subgroups.

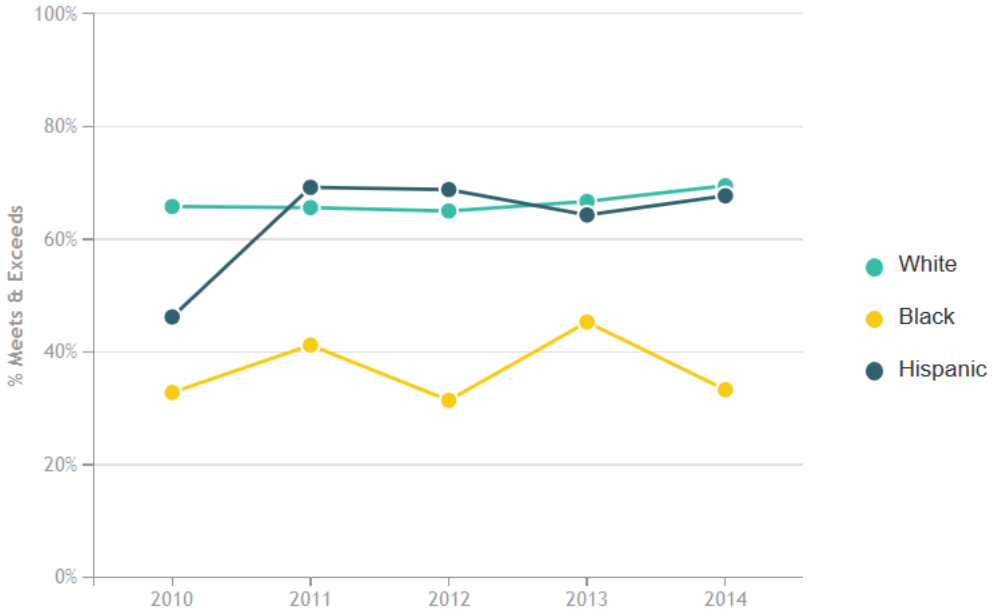

Figure 10. State achievement examination mathematics performance levels of Bell students over a 4-year period, by subgroups.

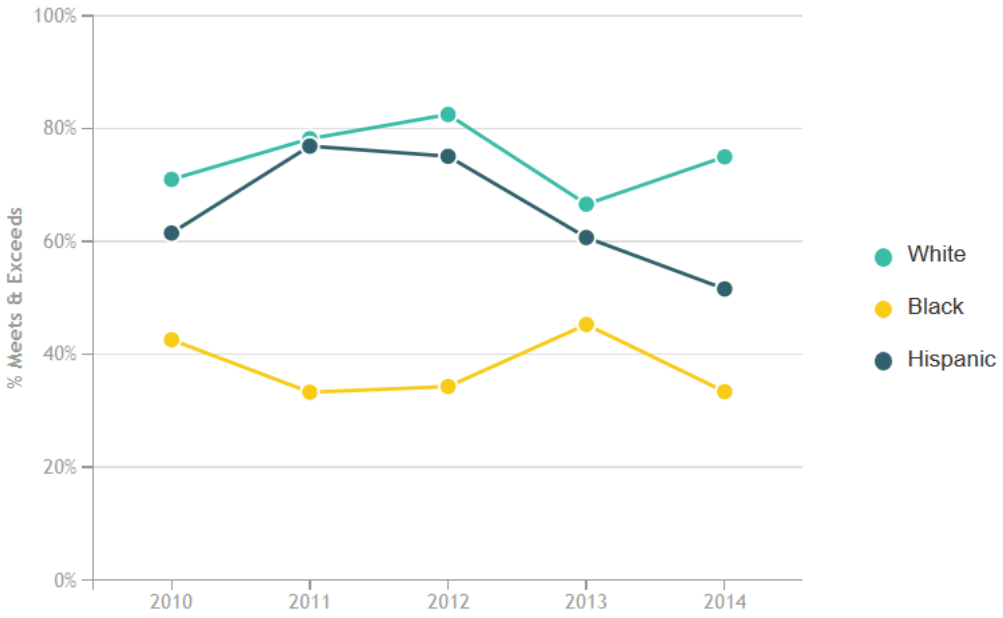

Figure 11. State achievement examination science performance levels of Bell students over a 4-year period, by subgroups.

In terms of career readiness in 2014-2015, 74% of Bell students achieved a Level 4 (silver) designation for the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), which means the students have the foundational skills for 67% of jobs found in ACT's WorkKeys database. The National Career Readiness Certificate is an industry-recognized, research-based qualification that certifies the requisite skills needed to be successful in the workplace. Fourteen percent of students scored a Level 5 (gold) designation or have the foundational skills for 93% of jobs found in the WorkKeys database. No student at Bell or in the district met the highest designation, Level 6 (platinum) with the requisite skills for 99% of jobs; only one student in the entire state met these qualifications (Figure 12).

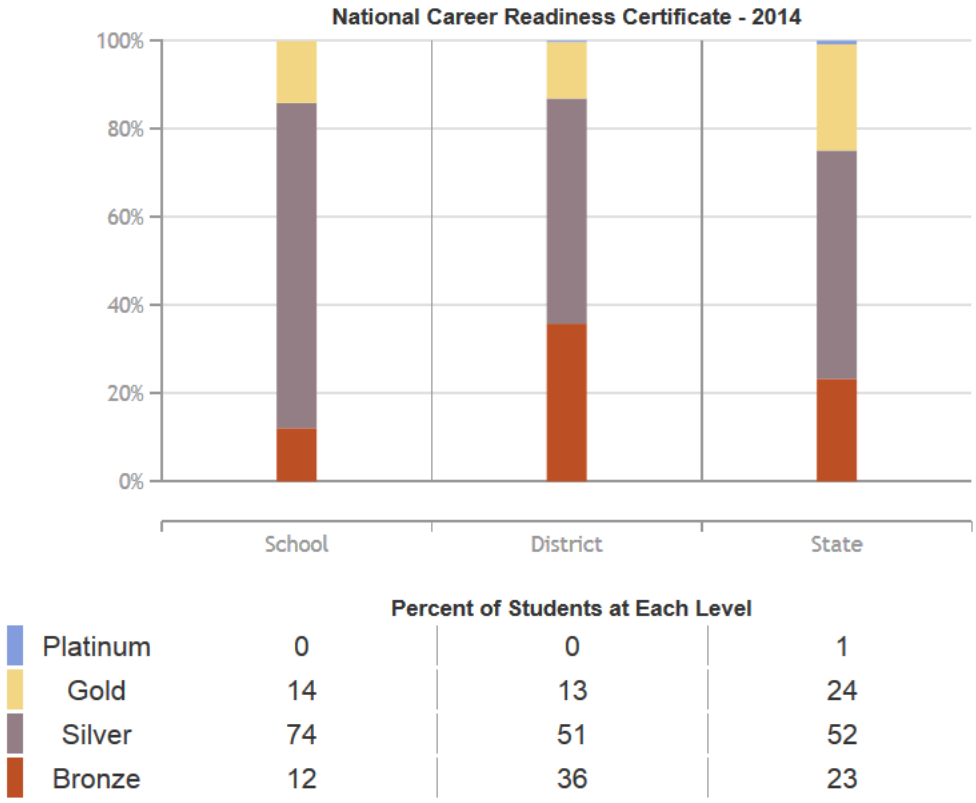

Figure 12. National Career Readiness Certificate performance levels of Bell students in 2014.

Bell's principal, Ryan Sandberg. At the time of this study, Ryan had served as principal of Bell for the past 8 years. Prior to this position, Ryan was an assistant principal at a district elementary school and an elementary teacher. He began his career in the district as a football coach 25 years ago and credits a colleague for encouraging him to return to school to earn his education degree and become a teacher. His passion for teaching continues to the present day, and he hopes to return to the classroom someday. In summer 2014, he planned to teach a dual enrollment political science course; however, the community college did not earmark the budget for his course, and it was not offered.

Bell teachers describe Ryan as being a strong advocate for students and teachers, not afraid to dig in and get his hands dirty, and creative in his fundraising efforts for the school. For example, teachers listed several vendors or colleges that rent school space on weekends or

evenings for testing services and college cohorts, and even the soda machines in the building generate revenue to pay for such things as student transportation for athletics or extension activities, summer camps, or student exchange opportunities. One teacher described Ryan as an "open door"; she recounted numerous occasions when she has walked into his office and said:

> I want to do XYZ, and he's like, okay, give me the information, let's do it. Then he'll come back and you just invite him to your classroom and he comes in. I think that's one of the good things here. We have a principal that's hands-on. Yes, he has to be in his office, but he balances the two. He'll come here at the crack of dawn so that he can go down here and see science fair projects, or come see us do interactive bulletin boards, or run outside to see the track meet, like he makes himself visible.

The teacher also described how Ryan's visibility, eagerness to try new activities, and dedication to his faculty and students permeates the culture and climate of the school:

> And when you see that [Ryan's visibility and hands-on nature], you know, that trickles down into your classroom, and it trickles down when you're doing it, it trickles down to the students. So we all take pride in that. Like we go to track meets, we go and we support the students' economy that's how our administration supports us. He supports the kids and each other that way.

In the student focus group, Ryan was described as "the man." Discussion ensued about what time he arrives at school and the consensus reached was that he arrives around 4:30 a.m. every day. He was described as "staying really personal"; he knows the names of all the students, he walks around the school regularly and pops in on classes, even working in the mechanics room with students and learning about the tools students were using, building something with the construction students, and working on the farm. Students shared that he took care of the farm animals when school was closed for a few days due to a snowstorm; the story goes he slept in the barn for two nights due to the blizzard. Not only is he interactive, but he also is always looking to learn something new: "He takes his own personal skills and teaches himself, not being just like the paper pusher. Being a real teacher." A conversation ensued between two students regarding who should or should not be a principal, ending with these comments:

Male Student: Yeah. He's pushing for a lot of things to happen in the school. And if a principal can't advocate for their school, then they're not really a good principal.

Female Student: Shouldn't be a principal.

Defining college and career readiness. Ryan's definitions for college readiness and career readiness are very similar, which is not surprising given his vision—college and career are seamless, one in the same. He explained,

> I think that we need to use college and career readiness interchangeable, because there shouldn't be much of a difference between. I just think that college is another step to get into careers. When we talk about getting college ready, it's again, we're all making students career ready and citizen ready. That's the end game. That's what we all—we all have the same goal. We're just different stages in that preparation. I don't know how to get them ready for college. It's not a whole lot different. Getting kids ready for college is getting ready for careers.

Yet, Ryan did not believe that other principals or district officials view it as such because principals are not evaluated on their students' college and career readiness. Schools and districts measure school and student success based on the data they have at their disposal today, test scores or graduation rates, but it misses the totality of a student's success or the value in their K-12 education when they graduate from college or advance in their careers. Schools and districts are beginning to collect data on postsecondary persistence rates, which enthuses Ryan, because he believes it begins to focus the discussion on the end result:

> If you want to measure a school's success, you can't measure today or tomorrow. You need to measure it down the road when you see our, not just our graduates, because you can measure us on our test scores, you can measure us on our graduation rate, and that's fine. But, you can't truly measure the value of someone's education until you see the end product. And you won't see the end product for years. That's what I think, schools get fixated, districts and principals and teachers get fixated on the incremental data.

Ryan defines college readiness as "those skill sets and knowledge that will, and habits that will enable students to be successful, not in college, but through college. To be successful after college" and career readiness as "that extended skill set that, and knowledge and those

habits will allow students to eventually become productive citizens. Workers, whatever their careers are, but successful citizens, spouses, parents, successful citizens." Ryan described how intertwined, infused, or seamless the focus of college and career readiness is for students at Bell:

> We're preparing you for the next phase. We talk about it from the open house when the kids are in eighth grade, and they come out here from school. We talk about the expectations that students are going to finish, go to college, and they're going to learn those things. We talk about it at our parent orientation.

His vision of college and career readiness, as an evolution, as a progress, also challenges the idea or notion of "bridging the gap," whether between high school and the postsecondary environment or between elementary schools and high schools. In his mind, it is necessary for students to learn skills and content to be successful in the "real world" somewhere, whether on the job, in college, in a trade school, or serving in the military. Ryan's hope, though, is that students leave Bell with the requisite skills and knowledge necessary for the "real world," he acknowledges it will be different for every student:

> I think it's [bridging the gap] terrible because, if there's a bridge it means you're going from one place to the other, and what it needs to be is seamless. It should be, it's all one, from the time you learn how to share when you're three. To break it, these are the skills in high school, these—there isn't. So if you don't learn these skills in high school, you're out of luck. If you don't learn them in high school, hopefully you learn them in college. You're going to have to learn them to be successful. It doesn't matter where you learn them, where you learn them or how you learn them, but you've got to learn them. And we're going to do our best to make sure they learn them here. And if not, we're going to direct them. I don't buy that—the gap. Again, it isn't in its entirety, us and them. Well, we're doing our job, and the elementary school isn't doing their job. It doesn't matter. And again, we want to leave them better off than they were when we got them. And that is going to be different for every single kid.

Advisory council. Whereas Bell provides students the experiential learning on its farm, Bell's advisory council provides students with work-related experiences in the form of internships, job shadowing opportunities, Career Day partners, and academic enrichment opportunities in the form of summer camps and internships, college visits, and college-going

experiences. A teacher described the council as the networking arm of Bell: The council fills a void the teachers cannot meet because many are not privy to the business side. When Ryan became principal the council numbered approximately 28 members and has expanded to more than 60. To Ryan it is always about growing and improving because that opens the windows and doors of opportunities to the students of Bell.

Members of the council range from university professors and departmental representatives, Fortune 500 company CEOs or employees, community business leaders, to Farm Bureau representatives. Not only do the council members provide career-related opportunities to students but they also provide students with leadership building skills, role models, networking opportunities, and a variety of skills and aptitudes that cannot be learned from a textbook or from a course. Council members meet formally twice each year, but members' presence is felt on a daily basis. Ryan also leans on the council to interview seniors on their capstone project, the portfolio they began building freshmen year that is updated with job shadowing opportunities, job internships, summer camps or internships on college campuses, and experiences in the classroom and school. Given the range of companies represented on the council, Ryan can pair students with companies or organizations specific to their career pathways to be their interviewers.

Providing opportunities to students. The words opportunity and experience were repeated throughout my interviews with teachers, students, parents, and the principal himself. In Figure 13, I enumerate the frequency of these words, searched in a truncated format (opportunit* or experienc*) within the context of college or career readiness. For instance, in the principal interviews, Ryan used a version of the word *opportunity* 7 times and a version of the word *experience* 16 times. I then reviewed the findings to determine whether the words (in any

version), *opportunity* or *experience*, were used to describe something provided to students or describes something provided by the school. Collectively, the word *opportunity* was used 22 times to describe an opportunity provided to students and 11 times to describe an opportunity provided by the school; the word *experience* was used 17 times to describe an experience provided to students and 8 times to describe an experience provided by the school.

INTERVIEW	OPPORTUNIT*	EXPERIENC*
PRINCIPAL	**7**	**16**
	Opportunity provided to students (3)	Experience provided to students (11)
	Opportunity provided by the school (3)	Experience provided by school (5)
	Opportunity provided to teachers (1)	Experience provided to teachers (0)
STUDENTS	**9**	**4**
	Opportunity provided to students (6)	Experience provided to students (0)
	Opportunity provided by the school (3)	Experience provided by the school (2)
	Opportunity provided to teachers (0)	Experience shared by teachers (2)
TEACHERS	**9**	**4**
	Opportunity provided to students (6)	Experience provided to students (2)
	Opportunity provided by the school (2)	Experience provided by the school (0)
	Opportunity provided to teachers (1)	Experience provided to teachers (0)
PARENTS	**10**	**5**
	Opportunity provided to students (7)	Experience provided to students (4)
	Opportunity provided by the school (3)	Experience provided by the school (1)
	Opportunity provided to teachers (0)	Experience provided to teachers (0)

Figure 13. Bell: Frequency of the words "opportunity" and "experience" in all interviews.

I highlight these findings to reinforce a reoccurring theme in comments made by Ryan, teachers, parents, and students about what Bell values most—students. Ryan explained,

> You want to see what a school values, see where the money goes. There are so many schools that say they value these things and you see where the money goes, and it's not reality. You know, our money goes to students. That's why we do the scholarships at the end of the year, if we have money left over, we use them for scholarships. We send our kids to, we have exchange students, we have exchange programs with Japan and with South Korea. We've gone to Poland, and the students do not pay. We want them to go out and get the opportunity to—it's good for them, it's good for the school they're going to, but it's good for our school. Experiences for kids is what we value. And that's where you're going to see a ton of money.

Ryan also spoke about opportunities provided to students by universities or colleges for summer programs at no expense. For instance, in summer 2014, California Polytechnic State University paid for eight Bell students to attend their Engineering Possibilities in College summer camp, which cost approximately $1,400 per student to attend, and Bell paid the airfare for all eight students. Ryan explained, "it cost the kids nothing to get that opportunity."

The students spoke at length about the opportunities and experiences they have had while at Bell and were quick to compare to the lack thereof by friends in other schools, whether within the district or in private schools:

> I think this school gives us a lot of experiences that other, bigger schools don't give also. We get these job shadows that we get to go on all the time. I know for a fact, my neighbor, he goes to [private school], and he's never said anything about going on any trips like we go on, working with professionals out in the field. So I think we get to do a lot more useful things for a career.
>
> I did intro college courses at [selective, Catholic university]. Yeah. I was allowed to go to, kind of take an intro to . . . it's kind of like one of the intro courses for one of my careers that I'd go into. They [Bell] covered all the fees and all that and sent me to go study under one of the professors there. Yeah. And then they sent me to study under the professor there, kind of to understand what I would be expecting of myself in the future, and what college is going to be like. And we got to . . . like we met a lot of students from a lot of different places, from all over. The program is just wide enough to allow students to really understand what college is going to be like, and then kind of, in a way, what can you expect to see from yourself.
>
> If they know you're interested in something, they're going to try hard for you to get something in that field. Or for our job shadows, kids in finance who are interested in working as a CEO would probably job shadow a corporate officer downtown, doing something down there, and figuring out what a day is for them.

Empowering teachers and students to participate in and take responsibility of their own teaching and learning. Another statement that resonated with me throughout my interviews at Bell is the phrase that Ryan often used: "yes, why?" Whenever a teacher or student approaches Ryan with an idea, he is always open and eager to listen because his mindset in life and in his school is always about what one is doing next, where one is going, how to improve, and "if there's a good reason to do it, we're going to do it. And we're going to find a way to do

it." One teacher explained how Ryan's genuine support and advocacy of students has empowered her and other staff members to do what they believe is necessary to enrich their students' learning opportunities:

> So I feel like that's what separates us from other high schools, because we have people in this building that are go-getters. We have a saying, "we don't take no for an answer." You can tell me "no," that's fine. I'm going to keep calling until my student gets what he or she deserves. And I think that's because we know that if we come to our principal and advocate for a student, that he's going to respect us for coming.

The teacher admitted she has heard the word "no" from Ryan, although she can count those instances on one hand. Ryan does disclose his school has a very unique campus that allows him opportunities others may not have; thus, he makes use of every inch of his "land lab." The mindset of always doing more or improving upon what the school has also trickled down to the students. A few years ago, a student wanted to raise turkeys and Ryan's response was "yes, why? And what's the end game?" After some pondering, the end game of raising turkeys was a community dinner for senior citizens on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. The first dinner was held in November 2013 for about 250 senior citizens ,and in November 2014 the school hosted approximately 400 elderly residents. Ryan explained,

> Everything, every bit of food, every recipe had something from the farm. We did our own pumpkin pies; we cooked our own turkeys; the stuffing that one of the local restaurants made had our onions, our celery, our eggs, our sausage from our pig, all in the recipe, so it was literally put on the table, but the kids did it all. It's something we'll do every year now, but two years ago, this was not even a thought.

Ryan and the faculty built on the idea of raising turkeys and serving the Thanksgiving dinner by incorporating all six career pathways in some capacity, from finance students calculating costs, animal science students raising and caring for the turkeys, food science students preparing the Thanksgiving feast, education students supporting the preparation of the event. According to Ryan,

> We get the birds in, we get everything set up. Everybody's involved. We have the Ag construction kids make the centerpieces, these turkey centerpieces that held flowers that the horticulture students designed and made. And last year, the construction kids also made cutting boards that they gave out to the chefs for helping out.

Another example of "yes, why?" or as Ryan laughed was more of a "yes, of course!" was when his college and career counselor asked for a "college suite" 4 years ago. The college suite is located right across the lunchroom and was being used by city police officers who were stationed in the school building. Ryan described how the college and career counselor

> designed it, and got the furniture and the computers and everything she needs there, and banners up there, and you know, flags from universities. Really, really cool. And when colleges come visit, she always has them bring, you know, something from the school that we'll post up there. It's a cool room.

What was interesting about this description of the college suite, in terms of empowering all to participate in and take responsibility for their own teaching and learning, was in a budget conversation about how the district allocates its funds. Ryan had spent approximately $12,000 of his school budget to paint, carpet, and provide computers and furniture for the college suite and later attended a district budget meeting wherein district officials were offering high schools a request for proposals for approximately $50,000 to enrich their college and career focus and create college and career suites. Ryan was surprised and asked if he could be compensated for creating his own school's college suite 4 years prior with funds from his school's budget. Ryan emphasized as a principal he does not focus on the budget but on the priorities he has established for the school:

> You want to see what a school values, see where the money goes. You don't look at the budget. You look at the priorities. We did it [college suite] because we needed to do it. It's a good thing. Our kids benefit from it. There are so many schools that say they value these things and you see where the money goes, and it's not reality.

An example of how teachers felt empowered is through their peer appreciative observations. The term alone, "appreciative," coveys a very different message, one of

encouragement and support of fellow teaching colleagues instead of an evaluation of a colleague. Peer appreciative observations occur quarterly when teachers observe a colleague who teachers in their same grade level (e.g., a sophomore English teacher observes a sophomore Geometry teacher), within the same department they teach (e.g., sophomore English teacher observes a senior English teacher), a colleague teaching an inclusion course, or a colleague in one of the career/technical education areas. According to Ryan, peer observations served as conversation starters, providing an opportunity for teachers to learn from one other, which he believes is the best professional development for any teacher or principal. The observations spark conversations about strategies or practices that may be student-specific, content-specific, or even simple classroom management techniques. One teacher explained that she was surprised to learn that she did not have to scream at her students to be effective, like a colleague she had observed:

> I'll never forget one time I went to Mr. Smith's class, and you know me, I'm such a holler or screamer, and here he is, "now students, we're going to do this." I learned that you can be effective being quiet, too, you don't have to scream all the time. That was a new thing for me. I'm like, oh my goodness, I don't have to scream 100% at the kids.

Another teacher noted she was amazed to learn a colleague administered group quizzes, and it worked; the students were working collaboratively together and using each other's strengths to solve the problems:

> I was shocked at how Jimmy Reilly was operating. It was so interesting. He had them in groups of four, and they were taking a quiz in a group of four. There is no stress. It was bizarre, but it was really good. They were all actively working on it, so they were pulling out each other's strengths and making it work to get the answer. So I started using that in chemistry. And I'm going to tell you something, I love it.

Ryan explained that the observations sometimes functioned as vertical alignment discussions among teachers and departments, which was powerful because it was not the principal dictating scope and sequence but the teachers seeing firsthand what content was required of students as they advanced from year to year. The teachers genuinely seemed excited about the observations,

citing how much they learned and borrowed from each other to improve their own classes. The words “fun,” “learned a lot,” and “reenergizing” were adjectives used by teachers to describe these experiences.

Case B: Orchard High School

The district. Fields Township School District is located outside a large urban city in the Midwest. The district educates approximately 3,500 students in two separate high school buildings with separate administrative teams; boundary lines divide the district geographically. The two high schools share teachers for specific courses and the district offers students a free bus shuttle between buildings for classes or extra-curricular opportunities not offered at their school building. The student population is racially diverse district-wide: approximately 60% Hispanic, 5% African American, 25% White, and 7% Asian. The district has identified approximately 60% of the students as economically disadvantaged and 9% as English Language Learners. District-wide, the teacher demographics do not mirror the student demographics; 90% of the faculty is White with only 10% of the faculty Hispanic. Table 5 provides information on the district’s demographics.

Table 5

Case B: Student, Teacher, and Principal Demographics by District

Ethnicity	Student	Teacher	Principal
African American	2%	1%	N/A
Asian	3%	2%	N/A
Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.0%	N/A
Hispanic	64%	10%	N/A
American Indian	0.6%	0.5%	N/A
White	30%	90%	N/A
Two or More Races	1%	1%	N/A
Unknown	N/A	0.5%	N/A
TOTALS	3,500	215	2

In the 2014-2015 academic year, 90% of the district's teachers held a master's degree or higher and the average annual salary for teachers in the district was $80,000 which is higher than the state average teacher's salary of $60,000. The average salary for a district principal was $120,000, which is approximately $20,000 more than the state's average.

The school. Orchard High School is located in a small, working class neighborhood on the northwest side of the city, an area formerly dense in industry. The neighborhood surrounding the school is dotted by brick bungalow homes and aluminum siding homes interspersed with 3-flat and multi-living homes or buildings. The school campus consists of a modern school building mostly built between 1954-1955, with additions in the 1930s and 1940s. An addition in 1972 added a media center and in 1974, a new fieldhouse, auto shop, and machine shop. In 2009, the district purchased 12 acres of property from a former steel company across the street from Orchard to expand parking and athletic fields.

The school's certified staff includes 94 teachers, eight counselors, three social workers, two assistant principals, two deans of students, and one principal. The counselors advise the students divided by students' last names and additional assigned responsibilities or roles (department chair, non-traditional graduates and NCAA, financial aid and scholarships, course selection, testing coordinator, peer leader coordinator, college counselor, and career and military counselor). In the 2014-2015 academic year, teacher retention was 85% and Principal Mark has led the school for the past 3 years.

In the 2014-2015 academic year, Orchard enrolled approximately 2,000 students; 4% African American, 50% Hispanic, and 40% White with the remaining 7% comprised of the following backgrounds in rank order: Asian, Two or More Races, American Indian, and Pacific Islander (Figure 4). Figure 14 provides a "facts and figures" profile of the school. The student

attendance rate for the school was 92% in 2014-2015 academic year with a 3% mobility rate, a chronic truancy rate of 2%, and a 2% dropout rate. Half of Orchard students were in families that received public aid, lived in substitute care, or were eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches. Approximately 13% of the student body received special education services whereas 7% of students were identified as English Language Learners. Orchard boasts a 90% graduation rate within 4 years and a 90% graduation rate within 5 years. Approximately 82% of freshmen were designated "on-track," which is a metric used by the district to identify students who have earned five full-year credits and no more than one failing grade in a semester course of English, Math, Science, or Social Science. The metric supports research conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research that found a ninth-grade student is almost four times as likely to graduate from high school if she/he is "on-track" at the end of 9th grade (Allensworth & Easton, June 2005). In addition, this can identify ninth-graders who are not "on-track" or "at-risk" and provide them with appropriate interventions (additional tutoring, instruction, or individualized services; Allensworth & Easton, June 2005).

Total Enrollment	2,000
Average per pupil instructional spending in this district	$10,000
Average per pupil operational spending in this district	$18,000
Average class size	21
Students in families receiving public aid, living in substitute care, or eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches	50%
Students identified as English Language Learners	7%
Students who receive special education services	13%
Students who graduated within 4 years	90%
Students who are ready for college coursework (combined ACT score of 21)	50%
Students who are career ready	46%
Level 6 (foundational skills for 99% of jobs) Level 5 (foundational skills for 93% of jobs) Level 4 (foundational skills for 67% of jobs)	0% 22% 59%

Figure 14. Orchard: 2014-2015 facts and figures.

Orchard does not have a particular career niche or focus; rather, it offers its students a variety of career-focused courses within a comprehensive, public high school. For instance, students can choose to enroll in art (photography and videography, studio arts, graphics design, animation), business (web or video game design, accounting, coding and computers, networking, technology support), consumer sciences (catering, chef, fashion and design, child development and teaching, medical careers), or industrial technology (auto repair, engineering, digital electronics, woodworking, metalworking, home repair and constructions). Many of the career exploratory courses offered also provide students with industry level certifications that can catapult them into immediate jobs or transfer into credit at postsecondary institutions. According to Mark, he and his faculty often discuss adding more "micro credentials and certifications into courses where possible to give kids a little bit more of an opportunity to have those experiences in school." Mark offered a specific example:

> We now have a track in culinary where kids can go all the way through advanced catering and into an independent study. Within that tract, students are essentially running the catering service that we run out of our school and that provides all of the meals for activities that we have here at school. And then they take one test and they're certified to work in any kitchen and they've had all these experiences here.

Another career-focused course opportunity presented itself to Mark in the 2012-2013 academic year when Orchard transitioned to a full one-to-one learning environment. Instead of outsourcing technology support for all the Chromebooks used by all students and faculty, Mark developed a class where students learned how to support and troubleshoot the hardware, software, and network needs of the school—in essence creating a help desk run by students to support fellow students, teachers, and administrators. In addition to meeting the needs of the school, students, and personnel, the course leads to multiple technology level certifications and

on-the-job training that makes students immediately employable in various technology sectors. Mark explained,

> We had eight kids hired within the first three weeks after graduation last year. We have kids that are going to school here still that work over at Best Buy for the Geek Squad and they are the most qualified people that work there. They're hired right away because they have A+ certification and they already had experience working at a help desk here which nobody else has, right?

In addition to career-focused courses, Orchard provides students in 12th grade a cooperative work program as an opportunity to gain real world work experience and exposure to careers through a volunteer or paid position at an approved company or business tied to a course at the school. According to the course planning handbook, the co-op course

> includes formal instruction in employment laws, interpersonal skills, work ethics, workplace knowledge, and career and college planning. Students will develop work portfolios and learn how to assess personal skills to improve career readiness. All co-op students learn the value of professional growth as a member of the Cooperative Work Program student group. As part of the semester one assessment, co-op students prepare to improve their scores for the various levels of the National Career Readiness Certification.

The career internship course, on the other hand, provides 11th and 12th grade students career shadowing opportunities over the course of a semester geared toward a student's particular career interest. The objective of the internship course, according to the course planning handbook, is "to provide students firsthand understanding of the knowledge, skills, occupation outlook, and education requirements for various careers; and introduce students to positive adult role models who can help reinforce and demonstrate [work] behaviors."

At Orchard, 50% of students are "ready for college coursework"; in other words, earning a composite score of at least 21 on the ACT standardized exam. Within the district, 38% of students were identified "college ready" in comparison to 46% of students in the state. When ACT results are further analyzed according to ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks (English benchmark is 18, mathematics benchmark is 22, reading benchmark is 22, and science

benchmark is 23), Orchard students perform better than district students, but not as well as all students in the state except for Mathematics sub-test (Figure 15).

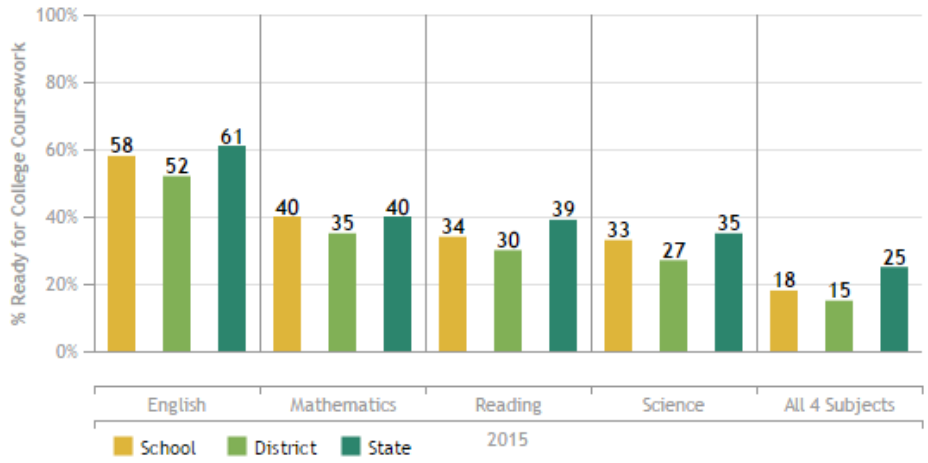

Figure 15. Percentage of Orchard students ready for college coursework, according to the ACT benchmarks, in comparison to overall district and state students.

In comparison to ACT scores, state achievement examinations measure 11th grade students' academic achievement according to the state's learning standards, or progress students make towards the learning standards, and assesses students' knowledge of applied mathematics and reading for information according to ACT WorkKeys. Figure 16 provides a 5-year trend of the percentage of Orchard students meeting or exceeding state standards as a composite score of reading and mathematics sub-tests in comparison to all students in the state. Figure 17 shows the composite score, over a 3-year period, by performance level of Orchard students in reading, mathematics, and science.

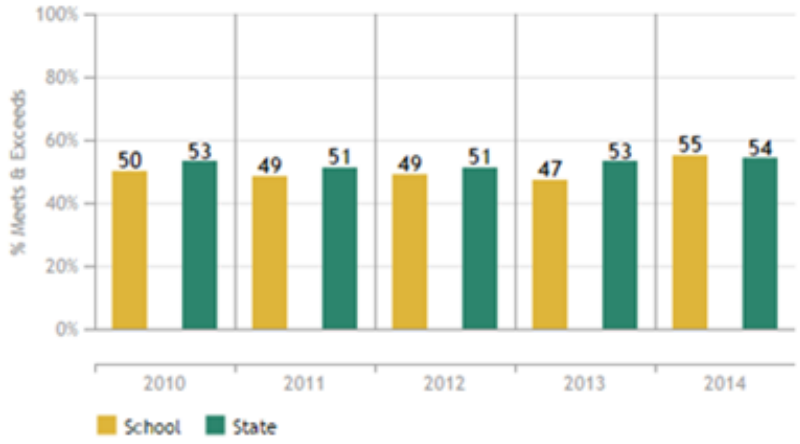

Figure 16. Percentage of Orchard Students meeting or exceeding state standards as a composite score of reading and mathematics sub-tests.

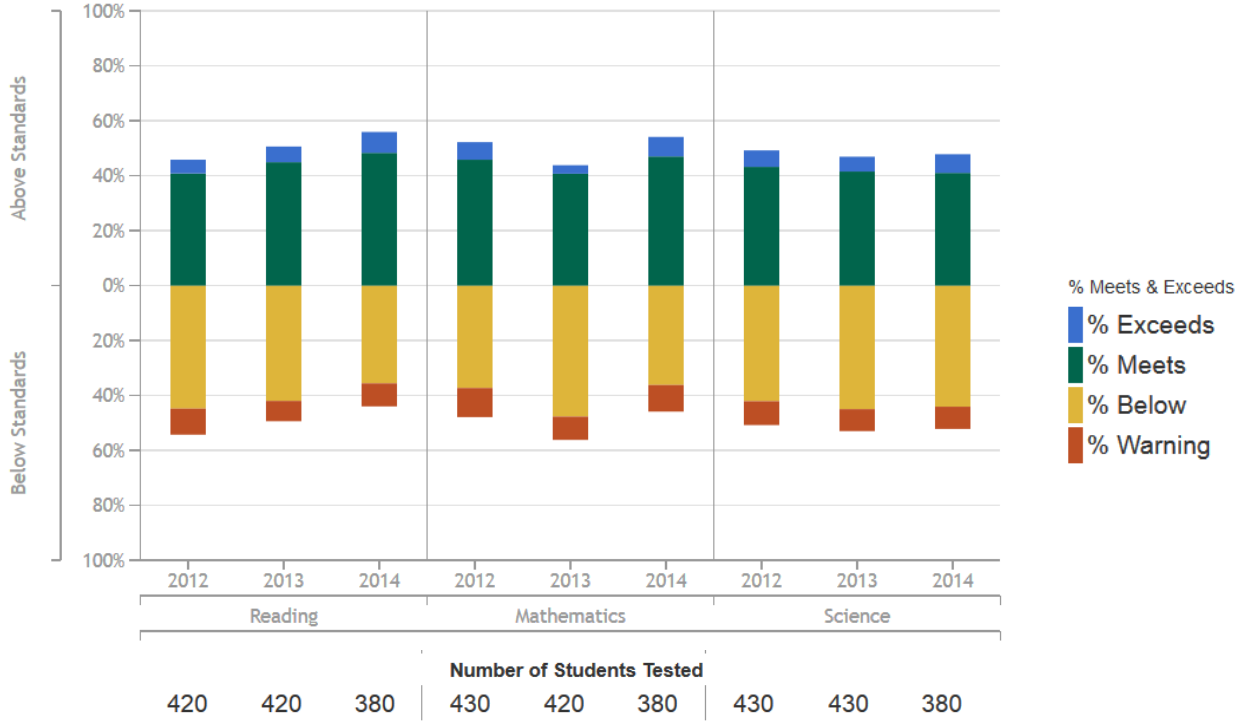

Figure 17. State performance levels of Orchard students over a 3-year period in reading, mathematics, and science.

Examining state achievement examinations' performance levels of all students by content (reading, mathematics, and science) is important when discussions shift to closing or reducing

achievement gaps among student subgroups; in the case of Orchard among the two largest student demographics (White and Hispanic students; Figures 18-20).

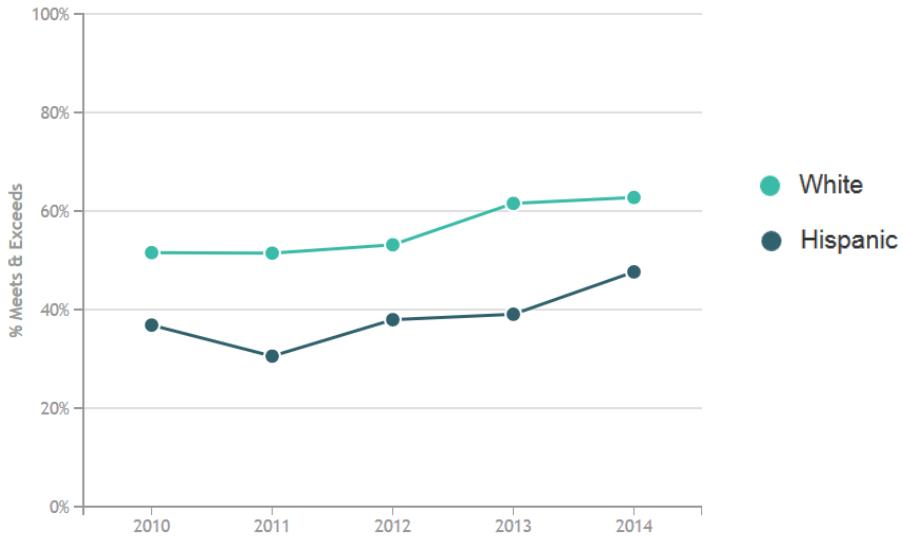

Figure 18. Reading performance levels on state achievement examinations of Orchard students over a 4-year period, by subgroups.

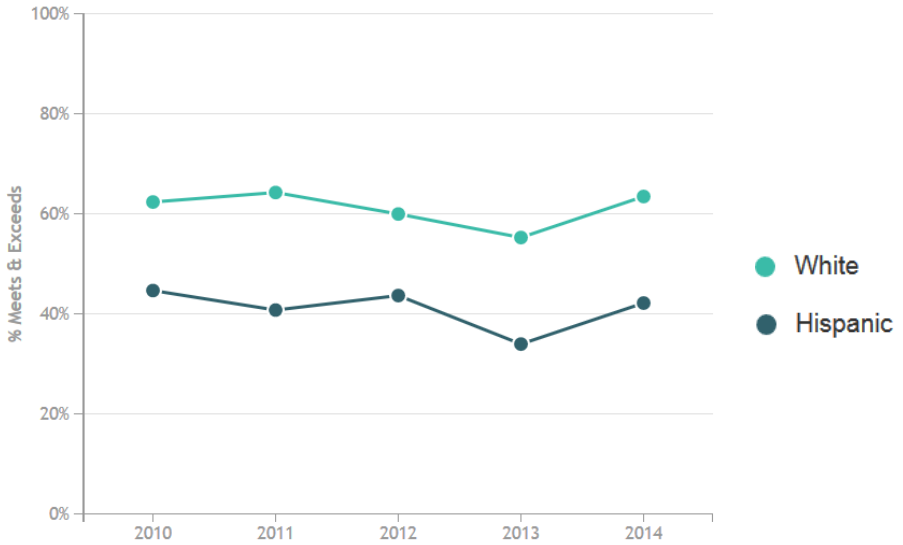

Figure 19. Mathematics performance levels on state achievement examinations of Orchard students over a 4-year period, by subgroups.

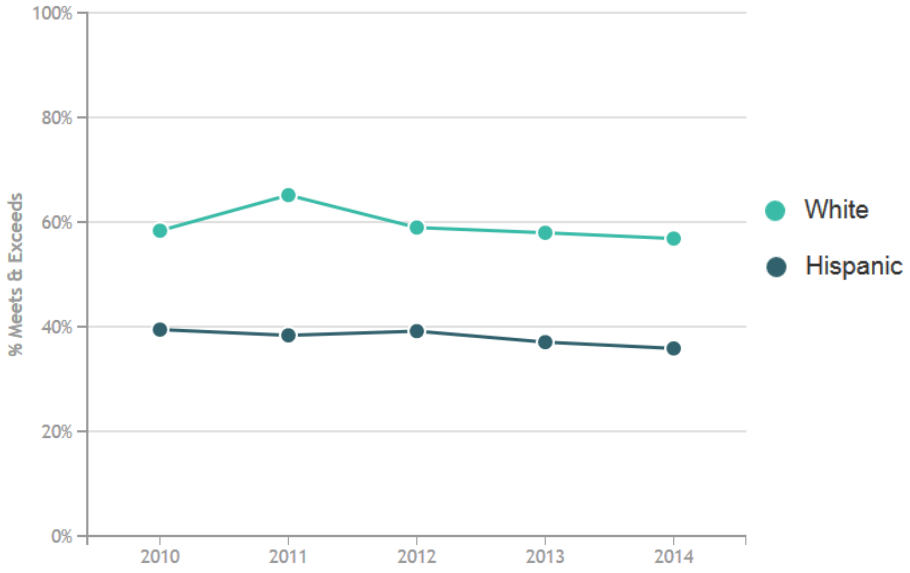

Figure 20. Science performance levels on state achievement examinations of Orchard students over a 4-year period, by subgroups.

In terms of career readiness in the 2014-2015 academic year, 59% of Orchard students achieved a Level 4 (silver) designation for the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), which means the students have the foundational skills for 67% of jobs found in ACT's WorkKeys database. Twenty-two percent of students scored a Level 5 (gold) designation or have the foundational skills for 93% of jobs found in the WorkKeys database. No student at Orchard or in the district met the highest designation, Level 6 (platinum) with the requisite skills for 99% of jobs; only one student in the entire state met the qualifications (Figure 21).

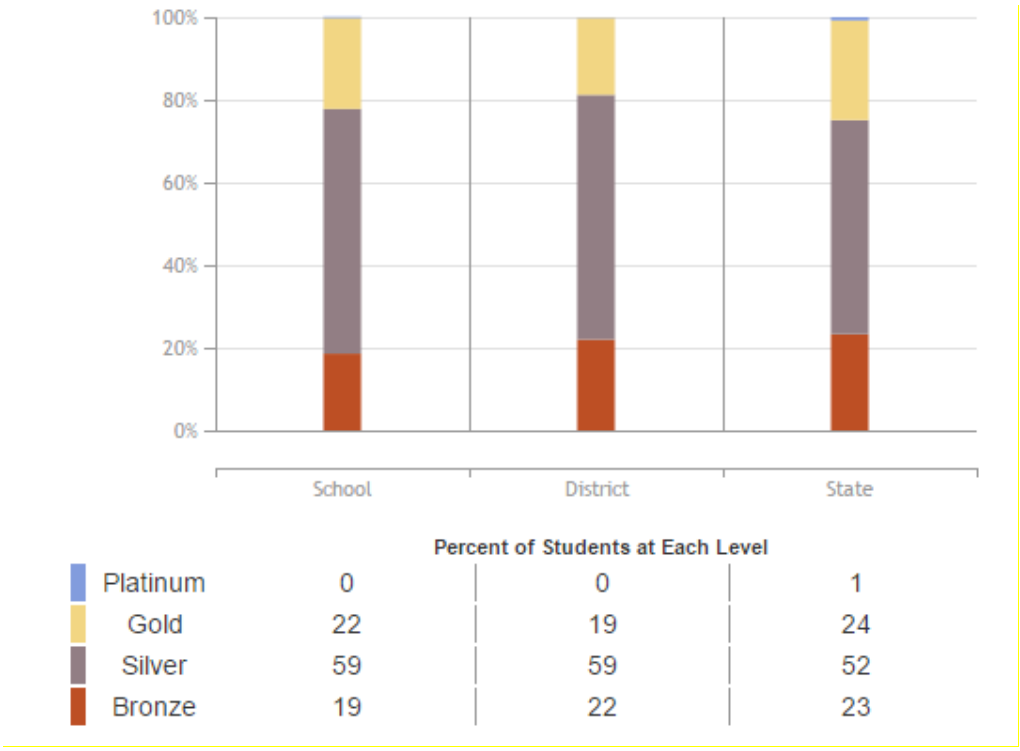

Figure 21. National Career Readiness Certificate performance levels of Orchard students in 2014.

Orchard principal, Mark Lyons. At the time of this study, Mark had been the principal at Orchard for 3 years, during which time he was recognized by the National Association of Secondary School Principals as an innovative leader who expanded technology to connect and further the learning opportunities for all students. Prior to becoming the principal, Mark served as an assistant principal for 2 years and as a teacher at Orchard from 2003-2007. Mark left his teaching position at Orchard, in 2007, to take another position out of state before returning as an assistant principal.

Orchard teachers describe Mark as being very supportive of their courses and programs they introduce and grow. One teacher described Mark as "constantly encouraging" and eager to tell others (schools or administrators) about the programs and opportunities teachers develop at Orchard. Teachers and students are very familiar or comfortable with Mark and visitors in the classroom at all times. According to another teacher, Mark's visibility and presence in

classrooms and throughout the school is "his image" which in turn makes him "approachable" and "students feel that they can just go up to him or start talking to him." Teachers also felt Mark was approachable or "open-minded"; one teacher stated:

> I don't think I've ever heard Mark say "no" and he doesn't necessarily say "yes," but he'll listen. It might not in the end be exactly what you envisioned at the beginning, but he's very open-minded and you know, anything that I've thrown at him he's always been very supportive.

A student described Mark as being "really enthusiastic about his job, about the school, and that translates to us." Students commented that as the leader or "head honcho" of the school, he leads by example and students pick up on it as well as the teachers. One student talked about Mark's visit to one of his classes and a joke Mark made with the teacher; the student said that interaction between Mark and the teacher was indicative of the rapport, respect, and enthusiasm Mark has for faculty, students, and all things school related. Another student stated,

> He's everywhere. He's always saying "hi" to people, he's dropping into classes and watches classes for a while. One small detail that maybe won't seem that important to many people, but to me it is, is that he knows a lot of students by their first name.

The student focus group also told me about the kindness campaign that Mark leads every Thursday morning of the school year. Mark, administrators, and some students hold up signs or personally welcome students as they arrive to school with inspirational messages like "you're beautiful, have a nice day, smile, it's a wonderful day." The "be kind" message is also spread throughout the school building and on my first visit to Orchard I noticed "be kind" messages on the risers of the school's staircases, a new addition to the school in the 2014-2015 school year. Students also described Mark as "adapting to our generation" by creating a hash tag for Orchard and a Twitter feed that he updates frequently, if not daily, all in an attempt to "catch the attention of the students and that's a big thing." A summary statement in the words of a student:

> I think Mark is doing a more than decent job with being involved with students, setting an example, and just trying to provide the students with every opportunity possible. And, I mean, we've seen that through the Chromebooks, we've seen that through all the changes he's made around the school. I understand since Mark was principal, I think the whole, entire school atmosphere has changed.

Mark's outlook or vision on providing all students every opportunity to explore the postsecondary world, whether in college or career, set the tone of many of our conversations. In Mark's view, Orchard is a place where faculty and staff are

> providing [students] a path for them to be successful, then define their passions and then be able to pursue their passion. So, that's why when you look at our course catalog or when you walk through our school you are going to see opportunities for students in about any direction whether its college preparatory or more of a career preparatory direction that you can imagine. I just think that that it's extremely important that our kids have every opportunity that they could ever want from school all in this building.

At the same time, Mark expressed his concern about high school limiting a student's exposure to the postsecondary world; in other words, requiring 13-year-old students commit to a focus, whether college or career, that may not necessarily "fit" them in a few years:

> I have that concern sometimes when kids are leaving high school and they are not completely sure what they want to do and I think that's understandable so I want to make sure that kids can be agile in those paths throughout high school so if a kid starts down one path they can start another if they choose to the next semester or the next year so they aren't these defined tracks that we put kids in either.

Marks' idea of "being agile" or allowing students to create a path for themselves allows students the flexibility and opportunity to explore the world around them in a safe and supportive learning environment; this theme is prevalent throughout Orchard.

Advisory boards. To support Orchard in preparing students for the postsecondary world, advisory boards were created that connect specific industry and business leaders with course specific Orchard teachers and chairpersons. Orchard has four active boards: technology, culinary, machine tool, and accounting management. Depending on the board, board members come together on a monthly basis to discuss course specific curriculum with teachers and gather advice

from industry partners according to the practices in the field and their hiring needs. Mark described the Board structure as a "constant back and forth" partner that also allows students to visit their companies or shops to see what they are learning in action. The business community is very engaged and invested in Orchard; Orchard's Director of Careers primarily leads the effort.

According to the Director of Careers, the various boards consist of "people that know what people really need to know to be college-ready or career-ready," which is different from meeting learning standards that do not necessarily make a student college- or career-ready. According to the teachers, the Boards have helped guide the curriculum for each of the career sectors at Orchard. As one teacher stated, "there's no use in setting up your curriculum to teach students something that's not going to help them to the next step." The Director of Careers adds that the success of the Boards is in large part due to the principal and his leadership because he allows the teachers to make relationships and then build on them by inviting companies and Board members into the school.

Providing opportunities to all students. As in the case of Bell, the words opportunity and experience were repeated throughout my interviews with teachers, students, parents, and the principal himself at Orchard. In Figure 22, I enumerate the frequency of these words, searched in a truncated format (opportunit* or experienc*) within the context of college or career readiness. For instance, in principal interviews, Mark used a version of the word *opportunity* 6 times and a version of the word *experience* 8 times. I then reviewed the findings to determine whether the words (in any version), *opportunity* or *experience*, were used to describe something provided to students or describes something provided by the school. Collectively, the word *opportunity* was used 12 times to describe an opportunity provided to students and 23 times to describe an

opportunity provided by the school; the word *experience* was used 10 times to describe an experience provided to students and 6 times to describe an experience provided by the school.

INTERVIEW	OPPORTUNIT*	EXPERIENC*
PRINCIPAL	**6**	**8**
	Opportunity provided to students (5)	Experience provided to students (7)
	Opportunity provided by the school (1)	Experience provided by school (1)
	Opportunity provided to teachers (0)	Experience provided to teachers (0)
STUDENTS	**16**	**6**
	Opportunity provided to students (4)	Experience provided to students (2)
	Opportunity provided by the school (12)	Experience provided by the school (4)
	Opportunity provided to teachers (0)	Experience shared by teachers (0)
TEACHERS	**4**	**1**
	Opportunity provided to students (3)	Experience provided to students (1)
	Opportunity provided by the school (1)	Experience provided by the school (0)
	Opportunity provided to teachers (0)	Experience provided to teachers (0)
PARENTS	**9**	**1**
	Opportunity provided to students (0)	Experience provided to students (0)
	Opportunity provided by the school (9)	Experience provided by the school (1)
	Opportunity provided to teachers (0)	Experience provided to teachers (0)

Figure 22. Orchard: Frequency of the words “opportunity” and “experience” in all interviews.

I highlight these distinctions to frame the conversations I had with teachers, students, parents, and the principal with regard to providing all students with a variety of experiences to round out their college and career preparation. Mark reinforced this theme by talking about the need to provide all students opportunities to find success or a path that leads them to something bigger, something different than a student may have considered for herself or himself:

> So I mean that’s, you have to sometimes go out on a limb, right? If you want to really make headway with the population that’s underrepresented and I mean that is certainly true, you know you need to kind of push it sometimes.

He recounted the story of a female student that had recently emigrated from a Spanish speaking country and arrived at Orchard the week before auditions were held for the school’s bilingual play. The student was given the play’s script and told to attend auditions by her Spanish teacher;

it was the teacher's way of getting the new student to meet others and develop friendships. What happened was even bigger, according to Mark,

> She ended up being the lead just blowing people away. And now that kid is in our TSI class. She's in psychology. She's taking all these other courses because just kind of this whole world opened up to her. I think she's one of the kids that's actually in both casts this year.

One example, out of many, that Mark spoke of during our conversations about providing all students opportunities or experiences lead us to a discussion of Orchard's open enrollment policy to most of the advanced placement courses. Mark spoke about the open enrollment policy in terms of allowing any student "to make those decisions and not sending out prerequisites that might favor certain students with certain backgrounds." Mark focused on a positive outcome of the policy, and cited an increase in enrollment and high scores earned by two specific student groups, Latino students and students that qualified for free and reduced lunch. Another exciting outcome or a "dynamic" change was the encouragement by an assistant principal in enrolling English Language Learner students, whose first language was Spanish, in the AP Spanish course by sophomore or junior year. The hope, according to Mark, was that after successfully completing the AP Spanish course, ELL students would enroll and transfer the skills acquired to other content area AP courses during their junior and senior years and earn additional college credit. A new policy that went into effect in the 2015-016 academic year was an internship course for students. Mark described the course as a shadowing opportunity for students in an area/s of interest to the student and with community business partners. According to the course planning handbook, the course allows students

> the opportunity to obtain non-paid, on-site career exploration opportunities. The major objectives are to provide students firsthand understanding of the knowledge, skills, occupation outlook, and education requirements for various careers; and introduce students to positive adult role models who can help reinforce and demonstrate behaviors

> such as a positive attitude, integrity, ethics, human relations, teamwork, timeliness, and many others.

In addition to career-focused courses and college credit opportunities through advanced placement courses, Orchard hosts a yearly college fair for students with approximately 20 colleges and universities and a separate career fair with community businesses advertising immediate job opportunities, part-time or summer job opportunities, and also career opportunities. Another career exposure event is a day Orchard devotes to career experts or professionals visiting the school and classrooms. Mark describes the day

> where we bring in people from all different paths in life and they do small group presentations with our kids, it's much more interactive. We'll have a group that can come into any teacher's class. Maybe it's a chiropractor. Maybe it's an engineer. Maybe it's an architect. It's very diverse and the kids get to interact a lot more and just talk about what is your day-to-day life like.

An event that was held for the first time at Orchard, in October 2014, was geared toward women and technology. Mark expressed the need for creating the event as an example of meeting the needs of an underserved, underrepresented, population, women in technology and in the STEM professions. Mark admitted that he was "pushing" for more exposure in computer science for his female students, in particular at the advanced placement level. Orchard has also uniquely positioned itself in this regard given its status as a 1:1 technology and learning school. During course selection period for the 2014-2015 school year, the opportunity for an AP computer science course sparked the interest of a small group of female students. However, only 13 students signed up for the course and it could not be offered. Ariana, one of the female students, was very disappointed and argued Orchard was not supporting women in STEM. After multiple discussions with Ariana, Mark, and an assistant principal petitioned the district superintendent to allow the AP computer science course to run with only 13 students. Mark argued,

> This needs to happen. This is an AP course. We need to have it. It's never going to happen unless we get it going and we kind of feed it. If we want to make that push, we have to trust that it's going to build upon itself. If they know the opportunity is there to take that course there's going to be more interest and more preparation and more thought about it. It's going to be that first one that goes through. So he [superintendent] let us run it.

The course did run in the 2014-2015 school year with 12 students; seven were female students.

Empowering teachers and students. Mark's empowerment of teachers and students reiterates his view of Orchard as a school that is "providing [students] a path for them to be successful, define their passions and then be able to pursue what their passion is." In Mark's view, the purpose and mission of teachers is

> to put as much in the hands of our teachers. Because they have the expertise within their particular content areas and they certainly have the most experience working with our students directly and so we want to give them that ability to be flexible and respond to certain things and certainly be the ones driving those changes.

This mission, or purpose of teachers, is highlighted by the fact that classroom teachers make up the majority of the school improvement team, not department chairs or administrators. The voice and ideas that teachers bring to the table is crucial or vital, according to Mark. In addition, teachers are empowered to write their own curriculum and assessments, develop the instructional strategies they know will work best with their students, and last, but not least, design their own professional development. This empowerment of teachers is then showcased in a professional development day that teachers design and share the strategies, curriculum plans, assessments, or lessons learned with their own colleagues.

Empowering students is also a powerful element at Orchard, beginning with freshmen students. Early in Mark's teaching career, Orchard developed a year-long freshmen program to acquaint freshmen with Orchard's policies, structures, and opportunities. In addition, the program offers incoming freshmen a way to support their academic, social, and emotional

development with peer role models. The program is a mandated every day after school for 25 minutes and is led by upper-class students mentored by teachers. According to the course planning handbook,

> the freshmen program was created to help Orchard freshmen make a smooth transition to high school academically, socially, and emotionally. The program is a place for freshmen to develop a small community of friends within the larger community of Orchard. Faculty advisors and upperclassmen mentors will help freshmen develop better study skills, achieve greater academic success, and develop friendships with a wide variety of classmates. Through the program, students will learn how to use the school resources, find help when they need it, become more involved in school activities, and feel that they are part of the Orchard community.

According to Mark, approximately 130 junior and senior students serves as mentors and facilitate the curriculum with a teacher in the background:

> We deliver a lot of kind of college and career programming through that whether it is our student support staff coming in directly to deliver that information to students or the students doing a litany of activities throughout the year based in that. For example, we have our career fair coming up next week, I think, next Wednesday. Hoping kids go to that we take our freshmen and they walk through with their advisory groups and when we have college fair we have our kids go through the college fair. We have been able to deliver much more intentional curriculum and program to students.

Another empowerment opportunity for students, "How-to Lunches," occur approximately 18-20 times throughout the course of a school year and are hosted by the student support staff. The how-to lunches cover topics that range from how to apply to financial aid, attend a college or career fair, talk to a college representative, write a college application essay, apply to college, or interview for jobs. An extension of this opportunity that occurred for the first time in 2014-2015 school year was a college application event that occurred one day after school for approximately three and a half hours. Counselors, administrators, and college representatives from around the state came together to provide individual support to students completing their college applications, whether providing advice on college entrance essays to what to include and not include on applications, and helping students highlight their accomplishments.

Summary

Chapter 4 provided a description of the two cases included in this study, Bell High School and Orchard High School, and shared emergent themes. Chapter 5 will bring together the findings of my study by addressing each of my research questions. Next, a set of recommendations will be outlined in Chapter 6 to advise school principals and school leaders, whether in schools or at the district or state levels, to work toward a leadership model to create schools and districts that provide equitable access to college and career readiness for all students through a social justice framework.

Chapter 5

Findings

The purpose of this multi-site case study was to explore and understand the leadership practices of principals in two high schools as they advocate for and build a culture focused on college and career readiness for students from historically underserved populations. In addition, I sought to understand whether the principals were influenced by social justice ideologies as they created a college and career culture and pathways for their students. The principals strove to ensure that all students, but in particular students from historically underserved populations, had access to educational and career-focused opportunities and experiences along with the requisite knowledge and skills required to transition, enter, and earn diplomas or certifications in postsecondary institutions.

Employing a social justice framework developed by Kincheloe and Steinberg (1995), this study explored the following three research questions:

1. How does a secondary school principal advocate for and support students from underserved populations in accessing postsecondary opportunities in college and career?

2. What system or structures are in place to facilitate a college and career ready pathway for all students, but in particular students from underserved populations?

3. How do the school's faculty and staff build upon the cultural assets students from underserved populations bring to school as they and their families prepare for postsecondary opportunities?

This chapter presents the findings, focusing on practices within the two case study sites.

Research Question One: How Does a Secondary School Principal Advocate for and Support Students From Underserved Populations in Accessing Postsecondary Opportunities in College and Career?

Data analysis revealed three major themes as the high school principals at the two case study sites advocated for and supported students in accessing postsecondary opportunities in college and career: (a) it begins with the mindset of the principal, (b) principals strive for equitable outcomes for all students through their leadership, and (c) principals ground their advocacy in interpersonal and pedagogical relationships. These themes are addressed in this section.

It begins with the mindset of the principal. Throughout my interviews, interactions, and observations of both principals at their schools and school events, I was humbled by their openness and justice-oriented mindset. For both Ryan at Bell High School and Mark at Orchard High School, it began with a clear and direct statement: these are our students, and our job is to provide them with a path that leads them to a college and a career—and not necessarily in that order. I highlight that last point, the order of events, because at both schools, students have graduated with certifications that catapult them into entry-level jobs. They have been sought out by companies due to relationships with the schools through their advisory boards (mainly comprised of local businesses, companies, and higher education institutions) or familiarity with the schools' career pathway structure, curriculum, and career exposure. I found the optimistic views shared by both principals as reassuring and humbling: reassuring in the sense that there are school leaders who believe children's opportunities in life are limitless when educators combine justice-oriented values with excellence in teaching and learning for all students, and humbling that there are school leaders who do not view students through a deficit lens. Both principals

were driven by outcomes, in particular how they moved individual students from an initial point on the high school trajectory to their final point at high school graduation. Most importantly, the recognition that each student was unique and viewed as an individual when she/he arrived at high school with whatever skills they possessed was inspiring. For Ryan and Mark, students entered their schools by way of multiple feeder schools, as well as other districts, states, and countries, prompting both to quickly begin to level the playing field—equitably, not from a deficit perspective. Next, I highlight specific examples of my observations and interpretations of both Ryan's and Mark's mindset.

The first time I met Ryan, I immediately noted his love of sports, through his analogies, stories from his past or family experiences, and sports references inserted into conversations. I mention this observation because it helps understand his mindset of always getting better or improving: It is as if he sets out to tweak or make changes to his playbook every opportunity he gets. That energy or drive to continuously improve or better the play transfers to how Ryan leads (or coaches) Bell High School:

> And I'm going to learn from this and we're going to make some changes next year, and if things aren't working well, we're going to make a change before next year. And we're always looking to improve. And I think that's just the mindset that we have and share from myself personally to the students. They walk in and I think they see that in action. We're always just looking to do more and do what we do, better. It's a group effort and it's just a continued effort that—it's just a sense that we're not there yet, and the reality is, we never will be there, because there's always room for improvement.

A discussion between two students during the focus group interview reinforces Ryan's description of himself and his faculty as always looking to improve and modeling that behavior so that students "see that in action:"

> Student 1: He [Ryan] goes to like the mechanics room and he goes and works there. Then, the other day he was out there at the house we were building and working on it. He goes out to the barn and works there. He's really interactive with the students.

Student 2: And he [Ryan] takes his own personal skills and teaches himself new ones, not being just like the paper pusher, but being a real teacher.

Teachers also spoke about Ryan's encouragement or expectation to attend conferences, meetings, or professional development opportunities to learn more about how to prepare students during a focus group meeting:

Teacher 1: He's very encouraging about that we should continue to learn.

Teacher 2: Of college readiness, career readiness. I know I've been to two or three this year based on this. That came from him, you know, look into this, attend this kind of thing, so that relates to college and career readiness.

Teacher 3: Well, we go to several out of school PDs [professional development sessions], and then we're expected to come back and, in our grade level meetings and department meetings, re-teach what we were taught and start implementing it.

This mindset of continuously learning or improving trickles down to a shared understanding among the faculty and students at Bell. Two ideas from Ryan stand out: one idea is that as leaders we cannot ask of others what we are not willing to do ourselves, and the second idea is that one can learn from failure or mistakes with perseverance. Ryan noted:

> I think collectively as a staff, I think we all, first, don't ask of others what you're not willing to do, and so, we, ourselves are looking to improve. I think we have that expectation of our students. We meet them where they're at. And it's their time in high school is really a journey for them. We want to make sure that regardless of where they come in, they leave here better served from their experience here. They [students] with an understanding of the importance of working together as a team, and you know to look to themselves first. To don't be afraid of failure. Don't be afraid of repeat failure. Just keep persevering; figure out a way to get it done. Don't be afraid to come in early, stay late. Those are the kind of habits and the expectations that most of our students leave with. Some come in with them, but we want most or all to leave with them.

In addition, these quotes embody an answer to a question that Ryan asks of himself as a school leader: "What have we done with the kids with the time they were here?" For Ryan, the end goal

is leaving the students better off than when they entered his school, regardless of who they are or where they live.

At the beginning of one of my interviews with Mark, he addressed a term that I had repeatedly used as I prepared materials for my research: *historically underserved students*. To Mark the term was inaccurate because the student body was comprised of a majority minority designation, whether by student demographics or socioeconomic status. In 2014-2015, 56.8% of the student body identified as being non-White; 50% identified as being low-income (eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches, lived in substitute care, or whose families received public aid); and 1% was identified as homeless. A teacher in the faculty focus group explained:

> Our poverty level is such that the majority of our students are what you may call underserved. Keep in mind that in 2009, we were about 14%, free and reduced lunch and today we're in the mid-fifties; so, we've had a considerable jump in a 5-year time period and we're constantly seeking new ways to support our students. Part of my job at Orchard is to promote partnerships with post-secondary institutions as well as businesses; we even started a women's mentoring program for girls so they meet women who look like them, who have similar backgrounds, and have had college success as well as career success.

Mark explained that his mindset and common lens, and those of his faculty, was such that any approach would benefit all students, regardless of the student demographic data.

> Interesting here because actually the majority of our population now either being historically underserved or culturally or economically underserved would be the majority of our students. So really the approach we take is probably the approach that mindset with all of our students. Not that we are unaware in all of that; I think that we tend to think with that lens so much so that it's probably just the common lens that we have for all students.

Mark continued with an example of an approach or mindset that he and his faculty had undertaken over the years to avoid the institutional "favoring" of a particular class or category of students over others:

> One example of that would be our open enrollment in AP courses. We really want to focus on students being able to make those decisions and not sending out prerequisites that might favor certain students with certain backgrounds. We're seeing that and the latest push by our other assistant principal, Mary, has been just dynamic with this the last

> year or so is getting our ELL students in our AP Spanish courses and getting them hopefully early, sophomore or junior year, they take their first AP course in Spanish. Then, our real hope is that by junior, senior year they are taking an AP course in one of the other content areas so they have that initial experience they can be successful in that course and then we can transfer those skills into maybe an AP statistics course or AP psychology course so that they can gain college credit.

In this conversation and others I participated with Mark, he applied a social justice approach or philosophy to his actions and practices. An example of Mark's social justice philosophy as a school leader: No matter who the student was or was not, she/he had an expectation to meet or exceed the academic or technical standards put in place by the school, district, or state. Otherwise, Orchard would provide them with the requisite support they needed with or without their knowing. In addition, Mark's advanced placement example highlights a commitment shared by Mark and his administrative team to provide all Orchard students equitable access to any curriculum: specifically, the opportunity to graduate from high school with college credit or strategies to support postsecondary success.

The breadth of Mark's support and success of students extended beyond the classroom. During my faculty focus group interview, the Orchard teachers shared a story about a young man who was attending school without a coat during a very cold winter. Mark had asked some teachers if they knew why this student was not wearing a coat or if something was interfering in his school life. No information was shared with me due to ethical and moral guidelines, but a teacher stated that a winter coat appeared one day in the young man's locker; they speculated Mark had placed the coat in his locker. This example relates to Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs whereby a student's physiological, safety, and security needs are essential: It is difficult to separate a student's life inside and outside of school if the outside world affects a student's academic progress. There was also an empathic component to this story—one of care as a value

and not emotion. When a focus group teacher recounted this story it was not presented as an example of charity or pity, but genuine care:

> It's like nobody judges the kid because the parents might not be taking care of them or they're making bad choices. It's not the kid's fault. I think people here [Orchard] love their kids; don't you guys think [speaking to the other teachers in the focus group]? I mean, if a kid's down? That they can have somebody [here].

Leadership is about striving for equitable outcomes for every single student. At both Bell and Orchard schools, I found an underlying theme to the structures and mindset of Ryan and Mark—the idea that as leaders it is incumbent upon them to open windows of understanding as both a reflective and critical improvement practice. In the examples highlighted in this section, out of many, the deliberate and mindful approaches both principals have taken were meant to prepare *all* students to attain similar levels of academic success by attending to the needs of students who may find themselves not achieving academically, feeling marginalized, or potentially disadvantaged in learning opportunities. Being mindful or understanding provides an equitable platform or support structure for *all*, *any*, or *every* student to garner every educational opportunity and experience a high school can offer. From the students' perspective, this understanding empowers *every* student to participate in and take responsibility for their own learning by feeling capable, comfortable, and competent while meeting the cultural, social, and potentially the academic needs of *all* students. In addition, this approach lays out a path to college and career from which *any* student can choose because they are knowledgeable, aware, prepared (academically and socially), and empowered.

At Bell, the implementation of a "no fail policy" in the mathematics department exemplifies the idea of opening windows of understanding. According to Ryan, the policy has "had a fundamental shift in the way that teachers think and approach what we do." The policy permits all students to retake exams whether they pass or fail—for the opportunity to earn a

higher score or ensure understanding of the material and earn a passing score. Ryan explained that teachers create five versions of every exam so that students have multiple opportunities to retake exams with different questions, but addressing the same standards. Students who fail exams are required to make corrections and explain their corrections in a meeting with their teacher. If a student struggles with corrections or description, the student begins tutoring sessions until he/she understands the content and retakes the exam. Ryan noted:

> I just think that that really typifies how, in my belief, how things should be done. If you're allowed to retake your driver's license exam, you're allowed to retake the bar exam, you can take the ACTs as many times as you want, why shouldn't you be able to take a weekly math test more than one time to get it right? I just think that it makes sense. So often there's a disconnect between not just what's taught in school, but how it's taught. Well, you know what? Eventually, so it's more important to get it right, than it is to get it right the first time. I think that that's what's important, because at the end of the day, we edit our letters, we edit our emails and that idea of once and done, I think, is a wrong idea.

Another example of shifting the way in which teachers think, approach their teaching, and open windows of understanding for their students in different contexts was by breaking up what traditionally had been double periods at Bell in the various pathway courses to create two new courses: one theory-based and one application-based. Ryan argued the change to two separate classes may seem like a small detail, but the difference it has made is big:

> And the goal is that they both get an A in both of those classes, but you know what? I want to be able to recognize the students who are getting the A in the theory part, because they get it, but they're getting a C or D in the applied part because they're not doing it. And vice versa, so we've got a kid who struggles and just has a real low C going in the theory part. Chemistry is pretty tough, and he hasn't been good in math, and getting there, they're just carrying a low C, but when you get in the lab, he's your superstar, and we want to be able to acknowledge that, because that's been huge. That's been huge. And you see kids really working, where before, doing well in one might carry them through, now they realize, I have to know and I have to do. And that's important going out [into the postsecondary world].

This example led Ryan to relate it to the real world or in a career setting:

> Yeah, I want smart employees who work hard. I don't want to settle for one or the other. I don't want that kid—I don't want the guy who can show up early and stay late, but can't make his own decision, and I don't want the person who knows it all, but puts work on other people. I want the person who can make the decisions, make the right decision and carry them out.

At Orchard, a year-long freshmen program provides an example of opening windows of understanding. The program creates a structured learning environment, led by senior year student mentors with the support of teachers, as a way to become acquainted with the high school's structures and opportunities. In addition, the program offers incoming freshmen a way to support their academic, social, and emotional development with peer role models with similar backgrounds. The support and reach of the program may offer all students a valuable resource given Orchard's demographics: approximately 50% of students receive public aid, live in substitute care, or are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches; approximately 13% receive special education support; and approximately 7% are identified as English Language Learners. Mark explained that, in addition to the year-long freshmen program, Orchard offers many other opportunities for students to connect with career or school professionals or to gather in-depth information; for example, bringing in career professionals for question and answer sessions, hosting information sessions during lunch periods, and bringing in college representatives and faculty members for after-school college application work sessions with dinner. In addition, during a focus group, teachers described a mentoring program offered in collaboration with a local foundation, which provides Orchard female students opportunities to meet women from similar backgrounds and hear their stories of educational and career success.

Policies enacted by both Ryan and Mark provide some examples of their efforts to develop equitable outcomes for every single student; however, no direct school data or data disaggregated by subgroup was offered by the principals to support the policies. Publicly

available state achievement data for both schools during years 2010-2014 offers a limited perspective of the disparity between student subgroups. At Bell, the gap between Black students and White and Hispanic students combined varied approximately 20%-40% in reading, mathematics, and science with the exception of 2013 when the gap narrowed to approximately 10%-20%. At Orchard, the gap between Black students and Hispanic students combined varied approximately 20%-30% in reading, mathematics, and science with the exception of 2013 when the gap narrowed to approximately 20%. Again, data review and access was a limitation to the study; however, providing anecdotal evidence alone without supporting data may be also perceived as a limitation to each principal's discussion of providing every student with equitable outcomes, in particular if policy changes were not accompanied by a continuous review process or critical critique for efficacy.

Leadership is grounded in interpersonal and pedagogical relationships. One of the first statements Bell's principal, Ryan, made when he was describing what motivated him to become a principal was, "I still consider myself a teacher. I still get to interact with teachers, parents, the whole school community. I just think that it's vital. It's in this role that I can make the biggest difference." This sentiment was repeated throughout this interview and in subsequent conversations. In particular, it is the theme of relationships and partnerships that resonate throughout the school and community. For instance, in his 8-year tenure as principal, Ryan increased the number of business, community, and education partners that serve on the school's Business Advisory Council from 20 to approximately 90 members. Ryan also expanded upon the schools' relationship with postsecondary institutions, whether community colleges or 4-year universities, to improve Bell's curriculum in agriculture and in summer extension learning opportunities, which has resulted in expanded postsecondary access and enrollment opportunities

for Bell students. It was through networking with land-grant universities that Ryan learned that the curriculum content for each of their entry-level food science courses was almost identical; through this discovery process Ryan also found that the universities were using the same textbooks and publisher exams as Bell students, albeit over the course of 2 years instead of possibly a college semester. These examples demonstrate how Ryan embodies the role of a teacher and ultimately learning leader of his school, because he sought out information and shared it with his faculty to improve and validate the work of his faculty and students.

Orchard High School has also grown its advisory board under Mark's leadership. An important component to its success and development is the support and ability to network with companies; according to an Orchard teacher, Mark encourages the teachers to make those connections because he understands the value they bring to Orchard and its students. I learned from the Orchard teacher focus group that collectively, the teachers connected to the various advisory boards have amassed an email distribution list with companies, former alumni, and other partners, numbering between 1,100 to 1,300 contacts. The expectation is that the teachers will always get email responses because business leaders want to employ Orchard students.

An unfortunate gap, however, that Mark has addressed as principal has been establishing a relationship with parents, and he created a position (Community Liaison) at Orchard 3 years ago to specifically bridge that gap. The gap with which Mark struggles is twofold: one relates to the level of parent trust at Orchard and the second relates to a cultural understanding of a parent's role in schooling. In terms of trust, Mark and the teacher focus group participants spoke about the high level of trust and support surrounding the teachers and the programs offered at the school. According to a teacher in the faculty focus group interview:

> The parents of our students put the trust in us at Orchard. They trust that we are going to make good decisions, and sometimes that's a little difficult on our end because you don't

> want to interfere with culture and on and on. Our parents are very hardworking; many of the two parent families, both Mom and Dad work, they are usually lower-paid positions and we were just at a meeting about Naviance and Jade [current counselor at Orchard] was an Orchard student from a Polish immigrant family and she said: "The parents don't understand because they're so busy working, that's why they have you. So that you can help their kids make good decisions."

Building on this thought, I recalled a conversation with Mark about parent involvement at Orchard and dissonance between what some parents expect of the school and what teachers and faculty members expect of parents. Mark explained challenges of working with immigrant parents whose schooling experiences may be very different from those of American school parents:

> And it's interesting because in the conversations that I have with parents and traditionally that we talk about here, our community is extremely to a very high level supportive of what we do. So if you look at our surveys, just extremely supportive of what we're doing. Extremely trusting in what we do. And part of this is when you talk to some of the parents about a country and the people that are more knowledgeable about the countries where they come from, the norm in some of those countries is schooling is done by the schools. It's not a place where parents are involved, right? Their child goes to school and they trust the school to do the job. And we see a lot of that in our community so we don't see as much involvement as I think we would all like, but we're still trying to do that. We're trying to bridge that.

These differences among parental experiences thus necessitated a more direct approach. Orchard has offered numerous opportunities for parents to learn more about the school or the technology the school incorporates by hosting luncheons or dinners during parent-teacher conferences, with Mark also leading yearly workshops on how Orchard utilizes Chromebooks and one-to-one learning environment. However, for the first 2 years only one parent attended each workshop. Mark then considered being more intentional or direct with parents and decided to focus on freshmen parents. The solution was to offer a Saturday morning breakfast for freshmen students who were failing a course(s) and their parents. The purpose was direct: We want to help your daughter or son get back on track. Mark also used the breakfast opportunity to

discuss data points, importance of keeping freshmen on track, and graduation rates. A takeaway from our conversation about the Saturday morning breakfast was to consider incorporating his technology workshop into the breakfast sessions. Another approach that embodies a leader who advocates and supports students from underserved populations but also builds on cultural assets (to be expanded upon with research question 3) is Orchard's distribution of formal communications in multiple languages (English, Spanish, and Polish) and the creation of informal communication videos by Orchard students in the three languages. During the faculty focus group interview, teachers discussed the idea of the English language as a barrier and intimidation factor for parents and families whose native language was not English. In particular, within the context of how Orchard involves, informs, and communicates with all parents in multiple languages so families can balance their student's needs with those of the school in a collaborative manner. One teacher described the use of translators at school events:

> At our Open House, there's a session with our Polish, Spanish and Bulgarian translators, so they're getting the same information in their native language and in letters sent home to them. Then when they come here and attend our events, our school-wide events, there is somebody who can translate into their native language.

In a follow-up conversation with Mark, he expanded on my conversation with the faculty focus group regarding parent involvement and communicating with parents in their native language, with his own technology signature. Mark explained:

> We now do video updates, like the news update that we do every other week here at school that our kids put together for our students. What we started last year was doing a community one. So taking some of those same stories, but making it more appropriate for everyone to hear so parents, community members, whoever and we put it out there publically. We e-mail it to all of our parents, put the link in our newsletter for them to see and we do it in English, Spanish and Polish. We actually do the videos; we have kids that speak those languages as the anchors. We do subtitles for all the interviews or we just interpret and narrate over the top of interviews in the languages.

Ryan and Mark both value and encourage relationships inside and outside their schools and have created structures or are creating structures that build upon relationships. Both

principals are aware of the vast resources that are available within their communities (whether local businesses or postsecondary institutions), or they simply understand the power that is unleashed for their students when relationships are formed and learning environments are created from a macro level. By building on relationships or forging partnerships, school leaders set in motion learning opportunities that can catapult students into roles and/or future job positions by opening their world to college and career fields. Both principals also embody this idea or theme that the end product for their students is not just high school graduation: It is their acceptance, entrance, and persistence in a postsecondary setting. In addition, a student's growth and development in the chosen career path does not end with a diploma: It is a lifelong pursuit. Whether it is through their strong business advisory boards, alignment of curriculum with postsecondary institutions, or creating bridges of understanding with parents, Mark and Ryan may have found structures that work in their schools, for their students, and for families; yet, they are continuously critiquing the structures and investigating other models.

Research Question Two: What System or Structures Are in Place to Facilitate a College and Career Ready Pathway for All Students, but in Particular Students From Underserved Populations?

Interview and document analysis revealed three major themes as the high school principals supported systems or structures that facilitated a college and career ready pathway for all students, but in particular students from underserved populations: (a) principals create a career pathway structure in their schools that builds a culture focused on college and careers, (b) counselors and student support staff are committed to the career pathway structure, and (c) exposing students to college and career experiences and opportunities contextualizes/reinforces what is being taught. These themes are discussed in this section.

Principals create a career pathway structure in their schools that builds a culture focused on college and careers. Bell High School is unique in its career pathway design and specific curricular focus on agricultural education. Bell offers students six career pathway options from which to choose, all focused on agriculture: Animal Science, Education, Finance, Food Science, Horticulture, and Mechanics. Many pathways offer students industry-level certifications that can be valuable in a job or toward credit at a postsecondary school, as well as dual credit opportunities with local community colleges. A teacher described how Ryan promotes college and career readiness within the school's career pathway model:

> In each of our pathways, they [students] have the opportunity to get a certification, and its industry-level certification. So we do realize that some students, college might not be the option for them, but we want college to be the option for them, so we not only have articulation agreements but we let the kids leave with industry-level certification.

In addition, Bell High School students have access to dual credit classes within each career pathway as another opportunity to prepare them for advanced studies. A teacher stated: "with our dual credit classes that we have, that's a way that, adding a lot of those courses to our curriculum is another way that he's [Ryan] communicated and supported and promoted this kind of readiness in our kids."

Career pathway decisions are based on student interviews that occur at the end of sophomore year. The rationale is two-fold; (a) students rotate through each of the six career pathways during their freshmen and sophomore years to garner familiarity with each of the content areas, and (b) students focus on their grades as class rankings determine the order of student interviews. The ultimate goal of the student interview is to ensure the student is placed into a career pathway for the duration of their high school career that aligns with their future plans, to an extent. Ryan described the interview process:

> Students come in with a portfolio. "Tell me about your experience your first two years here. And what did you do?" And they go class by class. "Tell me what you learned from freshman year. How about that art activity. What did you learn from, what mistakes did you make that you do differently now?" Then we finally get to the point, "tell me about your experience, your career day—because they have to have notes in there about the career day and all of that stuff is described in their portfolio." And we talk to them about it, then we say, "Where do you see yourself after high school?" "I see myself in service," or "I see myself in college." "Okay, what college? What do you think you want to study in college?" You get the idea. "Where do you see yourself after that? Where do you see yourself if 15 years? What would you like to be doing for a job?"

Bell's faculty acknowledges that the majority of their students will not go into agricultural careers or degree pathways after graduation; however, they are confident that each student will find her or his area of interest supported in at least one pathway. Ryan explained:

> The most important decision they [students] make is which pathway they want to go into. And again we know that not every kid is going into agriculture, but it's still important, because if we have a student who wants to be a nurse, we're going to—the student is probably going to end up in animal science, because animal science is, the actual classes are biological sciences.

Orchard High School, on the other hand, offers students courses in several career focus areas: art, business, consumer sciences, and industrial technology. Many, if not all, of these experiential courses provide students with industry-level certifications that can lead them into immediate jobs or transfer into credit at postsecondary institutions. Mark explained: "we're starting to build that more and more into our courses and get kids again the actual experience that they're going to have in the workplace by working on the training that's going to be needed for those careers." A teacher in the industrial technology department provided an example during the faculty focus group meeting:

> Last year (2013), we were lucky enough to place a couple of students with a recruiter, an IT recruiter. The recruiter actually reached out to our kids because our kids have industry-level certification, they have real-world skills, I mean they basically have work experience as 18-year-olds before they've even graduated high school. And so, two of our students started being placed at a pharmaceutical company and they were placed there as entry-level IT people. What happened next is that they did so well there that two other students got hired there, so now four of our students are working there and the IT

> recruiting company now wants our students before they talk to anybody else; they want to talk to our students immediately when they get certified and when they get through our program; they want to talk to them before they actually go out into the marketplace. So, it's really cool to see that—that we can get kids immediately employed, especially a lot of our students who are from underserved populations; they are immediately getting jobs right out of high school and doing great.

During a school walk-through with Mark, students were cleaning up after a pastry fundraising sale had been held during the school day. Mark described the catering service that is run by the students out of the school's kitchen as another example of Orchard's real-world career exposure:

> In our culinary program we now have a track in culinary where kids can go all the way through advanced catering and into an independent study where they're essentially running the catering service that we run out of our school and that provides all of the meals for activities that we have here at school. And they take one test and they're certified to work in any kitchen [as a career or job] and they had real-world experiences [here].

Mark was clear that he steers the Orchard faculty away from creating a school with a particular "career niche" or focus. He is steadfast in offering students a variety of career paths or at the very least making students aware of the possibilities:

> This is my personal belief now, that I'm always concerned about students making a huge commitment when they are 13 years old. I have that concern sometimes when kids are leaving high school and they are not completely sure what they want to do, and I think that's understandable. So, I want to make sure that kids can be agile in those paths throughout high school so if a kid starts down one path they can start another if they choose to the next semester or the next year, so they aren't these defined tracks that we put kids in either.

Mark then described how Orchard created flexibility or agility in career discovery. One opportunity is the senior year Cooperative Work Program wherein students gain real world work experience and exposure to careers through a volunteer or paid position at an approved company or business tied to a course at the school. Another opportunity is the Career Internship course that provides 11th and 12th grade students career shadowing opportunities over the course of a semester geared toward a student's particular career interest, with the objective "to provide

students firsthand understanding of the knowledge, skills, occupation outlook, and education requirements for various careers; and introduce students to positive adult role models who can help reinforce and demonstrate [work] behaviors." Mark and his administrative team intend to expand these successes and opportunities with "micro credentials and certifications into courses where possible because we're really trying to explore those to give kids a little bit more of an opportunity to have those experiences in school." At the time of our interview, the administration was exploring adding CPR certification and personal training certification to the physical education courses.

The policies, structures, and anecdotal evidence offered by both principals is compelling; in particular, the number of students that were employed right after high school graduation, earned college-level credit or certifications, or the companies or corporations that employed students from both high schools. However, the lack of data offered to support the evidence is questionable and also a limitation to the study. Publically available state data for the year of the study, 2014-2015, highlights a number of indicators that may or may not support the evidence provided. The percentage of students that graduated from both high schools was higher than the state average of 86%—Bell at 91% and Orchard at 87%, whereas the percentage of students ready for college coursework (a combined ACT score of 21) at both high school was almost identical to the state average of 45.6%. Measured on career-ready skills, 15% more Bell students than Orchard students (74% and 59% respectively) achieved a level 4 designation on the National Career Readiness Certificate continuum, which means that students have the foundational skills for 67% of jobs; the state average was 52%. Neither school superseded the state average of 24% in a level 5 designation (students with foundational skills for 93% of jobs). Although state data does offer a limited perspective of the college and career outcomes of

students, no correlation or association connects the career pathway efforts at the high school level with college and career outcomes. Furthermore, neither school collected nor aggregated student-based data to support their own career pathway structures or introduced evidence that either school critiqued or was critiquing the structures in place to support their policies or structures.

Counselors and student support staff are committed to the career pathway structure. At Bell High School, Ryan began his conversation about the counselors by prefacing that college and career advising was not placed only on the shoulders of the counselors: "Here's the thing. It's everybody's responsibility. And again, it's not departmentalized." Bell employs two full-time counselors, one who focuses on the sophomore and junior classes and one who is assigned the freshmen and senior classes. The focus of the sophomore and junior counselor is more managerial; ensuring students are choosing the correct classes, are signing up for college visits, and have their transcripts up-to-date. The freshmen and senior counselor leads the summer freshmen orientation program and sets the expectation for incoming students, in terms of earning courses credits, career pathway structure, and college preparations

At Orchard High School, Mark attributes the developmental, programmatic approach to the counseling model as one of the most important systemic overhauls at his school. Specifically, Mark dates the model back to when Orchard hired their new counseling department chair almost 16 years ago:

> We have been able to deliver much more intentional curriculum and program to students. And the other part of that is a very strategic sequence of activities our school counselors go through with their students freshmen through senior. That is, a range of college and career programming, so you know they have a couple different touch points where they are talking about careers and college with interest surveys going a little bit deeper.

The eight Orchard counselors divided the student body alphabetically by their last name to create their respective caseloads. In addition, each counselor has a specific specialty area (department chair, non-traditional graduates and NCAA, financial aid and scholarships, course selection, testing coordinator, peer leader coordinator, college counselor, and career and military counselor) that can also support individual or groups of students.

Exposing students to college and career experiences and opportunities contextualizes and reinforces what is being taught. At Bell High School, Ryan has networked on his own and through his Advisory Council to provide numerous opportunities for students and mostly at no cost to the students, including job shadowing experiences. Also, students have attended universities and colleges for summer programs while other students and teachers participated in exchange programs with South Korea, Japan, and Poland. The teachers explained:

> Teacher 1: All of our students, by the time they graduated, will have participated in at least one job shadow, and in most instances two. And when we say job shadow, they go in the field and they're actually shadowing someone for the entire day. And it's typically lined up to a field that's ag related that they want to go into so that they know, like, okay, this person is a food scientist—how did they become a food scientist? So then again it goes back to that college and career readiness, where they're telling them this is my path, this is how I got to this job, this is what I do every day. So we have several opportunities besides job shadow. We have guest speakers.
>
> Teacher 2: [And take] them to universities. We take them, so they get to see how college and career goes.
>
> Teacher 3: Career Day. All the teachers take a seat back and they give over their class to a professional for that day, so every kid goes through seven classes where they're seeing a different professional every—all four years that they're here.

In addition, the teachers described how the career pathway structure promotes the college and career readiness of Bell students:

> Teacher 1: Where each of our pathways, they have the opportunity to get a certification, and it's industry level certification, so we do realize that some students, college might not be the option for them, but we want college to be the

> option for them, so we not only have articulation agreements, but we let the kids leave with industry level certification. So like Miss Grace has food science and technology, and her students get the food and sanitation license, so with that food and sanitation license.
>
> Teacher 2: It validates the skills that they have. And not that they don't need to go to college. A lot of times the kids who do go to college that have the certificate, they don't have to take the sanitation course because that's the purpose of the course in college. So I've had kids come back and tell me "yeah, you know, I didn't have to take this [referring to course] because I had this [course], Miss Grace."

Bell hosts a yearly College Fair that was reorganized a few years ago to a format that allowed students to see all colleges in one large area and then go back to ask specific questions or learn more about their programs. The reorganized format was proposed by Bell's assistant principal after attending an agricultural conference out-of-state and experiencing the large, open format. Originally, Bell set up the college fair in the narrow hallways of the first floor, in a long line which did not allow for two-way traffic or space to talk. Ryan admits, originally he did not see the value in the new structure or organization of the college fair but was open to the idea. The following year Bell held the College Fair in the school gymnasium, a very large space with ample bleachers on each sides of the court, and afterward administered a survey to the students. The results did not surprise Ryan:

> They [students] loved it. Especially the kids who thought it was so much better than last year. It was so much fun in the gym. And I got to see everybody. It was, it just had a plus. It just has this feel like it's a buzz. You know, you're in a more fixed area. It's a huge area.

The College Fair evolved into a College and Career Night. In an interview, Ryan acknowledged the Fair had become too overwhelming between the colleges that came to share information about their degrees and programs and the companies that came to share job opportunities, especially for the parents. For Ryan, the Fair provided an occasion for parents to understand the

opportunities that Bell High School could offer their children, given the agricultural curricular focus of the school:

> So they start to realize, "Oh my gosh! My kid doesn't have to move to Topeka, Kansas to work for Cargill. They can stay here?" So they start realizing, "Wait a second, agriculture is right here. I had no idea." You know what I mean?

At Orchard, Mark spoke about providing all students opportunities or experiences that could lead them to postsecondary success or college credit. In particular, Mark referenced the open enrollment policy to the advanced placement courses at Orchard. He spoke about this policy permitting any student "to make those decisions and not sending out prerequisites that might favor certain students with certain backgrounds." Mark focused on two particular groups, Latino students and students who qualified for free and reduced lunch, and cited an increase in their advanced placement course enrollments and the high scores they achieved as a positive outcome of the policy. Another exciting outcome or a "dynamic" change was the encouragement by an assistant principal to enroll English Language Learners (ELL) whose first language is Spanish in the AP Spanish course by their sophomore or junior year. The objective, according to Mark, is that after successfully completing the AP Spanish course, ELL students would enroll and transfer the skills acquired to other content area advanced placement courses to earn additional college credits.

A new program that Mark anticipated in the 2015-2016 academic year is an internship course for students. Mark described the course as a shadowing opportunity for students in an area of interest to the student and with community business partners. The course planning handbook described this course:

> Students will have the opportunity to obtain non-paid, on-site career exploration opportunities. The major objectives are to provide students firsthand understanding of the knowledge, skills, occupation outlook, and education requirements for various careers; and introduce students to positive adult role models who can help reinforce and

> demonstrate behaviors such as a positive attitude, integrity, ethics, human relations, teamwork, timeliness, and many others.

Orchard students were also exposed to a college fair hosted by their high school, with approximately 20 colleges and universities participating. A career fair is also hosted by Orchard, with community businesses advertising immediate job opportunities, part-time or summer job opportunities, and also career opportunities. Another Orchard career exposure event is a program called "Bring in the Experts Day." Mark described the day as

> where we bring in people from all different paths in life and they do small group presentations and our kids; it's much more interactive, so we'll have a group that can come into any teacher's class. Maybe it's a chiropractor. Maybe it's an engineer. Maybe it's an architect. You know whatever. From all different paths. It's very diverse and the kids get to interact a lot more and just talk about what is your day-to-day life like.

A "Women in Technology" event held for the first time at Orchard in October 2014 was geared towards women in technology, computer science, and STEM fields. Mark cited the need for this activity as an example of meeting the needs of an underserved, underrepresented, population—women in technology and in the STEM professions. In addition, Orchard has positioned itself as a one-to-one technology and learning school. Mark explained in an interview that he has been "pushing" for more exposure in computer science for his female students, in particular at the advanced placement level. An opportunity presented itself in the 2014-2015 school year when an AP computer science course sparked the interest of a small group of female students. However, an insufficient number registered for the course and it could not be offered. Ariana, one of the female students, was very disappointed and argued Orchard was not supporting women in STEM, even though Mark talked about it often. Mark and an assistant principal petitioned the superintendent to allow the AP computer science course to be provided. The course did run in the 2014-2015 school year with 12 students; seven were female students.

The approaches that Ryan and Mark take to building or supporting systems that facilitate a college and career ready pathway for all students are fundamentally different. Ryan at Bell High School created a career and college structure based on an agricultural focus, whereas Mark, at Orchard, continues to expand the career and college focus to encompass as many career pathway options as possible. Both models empower students and with the support of counselors either focus on a particular skill set or content area or by experiencing a variety of skills to find which one suits their ever-changing life or needs. Although the approaches are different they do converge in one area: contextualizing or reinforcing what is being taught in the classroom to mirror the larger realities of their postsecondary careers, whether in college or in a job training program. Yet, no evidence or discussion ensued as to how the principals or their faculties evaluate the college and/or career experiences and opportunities for efficacy or long-term growth or access. For example, it was unclear whether the principals and faculty factored regional labor and employment data into their schools' career pathway offerings or collect and reviewed career interest surveys of the students. Also unclear was whether each school had a contingency plan in place for a change in networked relationships or career pathway offerings or whether plans were in place to ensure that the business advisory groups or corporations could support each of the schools for an infinite period of time.

Research Question Three: How Do the School's Faculty and Staff Build Upon the Cultural Assets Students From Underserved Populations Bring to School as They and Their Families Prepare for Postsecondary Opportunities?

In answering this question, data analysis revealed two themes: (a) student and family diversity is integral and unifying, and (b) every willing student participates in every activity—even with ifs, ands, or buts.

Student and family diversity is integral and unifying. At Bell High School, Ryan believes that diversity is the foundation or asset of the school just as the strength in our nation is a result of our country's diversity:

> I think that's key. I think we're one of the most diverse countries in the world, and I don't think that's a coincidence. I think our strength lies in our diversity. I know our strength here in our school lies in our diversity. We are about as diverse a student population as you can find. We are diverse demographically, first and foremost; we are diverse geographically, we have kids come from all over the city; we are diverse economically, we have students who are homeless, we have students who are in temporary living conditions, we have students whose parents are doctors and lawyers.

To Ryan, diversity is celebrated and unites the student body; the diversity also lends itself to a college and career experience whereby students will meet individuals like themselves and also unlike themselves as future roommates, colleagues, employers, and friends:

> I mean you have to come here and you have to make . . . friends. And it's like going to college. Your roommate might be from Lincoln, Nebraska, or New York City. That's how it is here. You're going to find people very different from you. And your experience, and you're going to be better off for it. And the nice thing is that the differences are recognized, appreciated, shared, valued to a point where the differences are what makes the student body cohesive.

During my parent focus group meeting at Bell High School a mother, also an elementary teacher within the district, shared the "biggest concern" she had about her daughter attending Bell was that she would not acclimate or socialize; it was going to be the first integrated experience. However, her daughter wanted to attend Bell because of its culinary arts program instead of attending a different school with her brother or another selective enrollment school. The mother described how reassured she became over the first few months at school based on the conversations she was having with her daughter at home or in the car after school about her new friends and at times, new cultural experiences:

> So, I gave her a while, and, probably around January, I asked her, because every once in a while she would come home, "My friend Lexi said . . ." you know different names were popping up, and I could tell that they were all different people. She gives me a rundown

> of the day. "Lexi bought some Mexican candy today. And it didn't look really good. It didn't even look like candy, but she made me try it." And I said, "Well, did you like it?" "No, I told her it wasn't good." And I say, "But you tried it." She says, "It tasted more like bread." You know, and I said, "Well, for them, maybe it was sweet, and just different." And I see a lot of that going on. And this guys and girls. She's friends with guys, she's friends with girls, she's everybody's—they're very open.

The dialogue continued and the same mother brought up a very poignant question and conversation she had with her daughter and race and culture:

> And so I asked her, I said, "Well, do you find that African American students flock to the African American students? Do the Hispanic students stay with Hispanics?" And she said, "No." And I said, "Oh, so it's just like High School Musical?" That's my favorite. That's truly, I'm like, "That is what high school is supposed to be. So much so." And she said, "Yeah, it really is like that." And I figure, if it's like that with kids, that's the hardest part.

I asked the other parents if they thought the school played a role in orchestrating the *High School Musical* atmosphere or the comfort level among the students with diversity, race, or culture. They responded:

> Parent 1: I think they, somehow they've made everybody comfortable. Because she's even talked about the students who have come to her about her sexuality. And she's fine with it, and so, somehow, everybody, and I don't think just the principal could create that open atmosphere.
>
> Parent 2: Or that comfortable, so it has to be, I would think, the teachers also, and the staff. I think it does; I think that role, that responsibility does lie with the principal for seeing that in people. To pull that team.
>
> Parent 3: You know the adults in the building, even if it's not something that they initiated, they will help to, I would imagine they would help to foster it.

At Orchard High School, Mark describes the diversity as rich: "I feel like we've always recognized the strength at Orchard with our diversity. Especially culturally and linguistically: I mean we have typically over 30, 30-32 different languages spoken in our homes." He admits, though, that he has become more purposeful in his approach to meet the linguistic and cultural needs of his students and families since becoming principal. During a faculty focus group

interview, a teacher described how Orchard's English Language Learner department chair has taken the lead in providing all families school information, to the best of their ability, in native languages:

> The department chair has done an exceptional job with reaching out to parents and making sure that there's programming specifically for students and for their parents during Open House and other events. There's now a session with our Polish, Spanish and Bulgarian translators, so parents are getting the same information in their native language as well as with letters sent home to tell them about it. Then when they come here and attend our events, our school-wide events, there is somebody who can translate into their native language. Our big languages, not every single language, but our major languages.

At Orchard, I saw *High School Musical* play out as an actual performance and spread throughout the school, beginning with their annual bilingual play. Mark recounted the story of a female student who had recently emigrated from a Spanish-speaking country, arriving at Orchard the week before auditions for the school's bilingual play. The student was given the play's script by her Spanish teacher and told to attend auditions—it was the teacher's way of getting the new student to meet others and develop friendships. What happened next was even bigger, according to Mark:

> She ended up being the lead just blowing people away. And now that kid is in our technology class. She's in psychology. She's taking all these other courses because just kind of this whole world opened up to her. I think she's one of the kids that's actually in both casts this year. There's a number of kids now that do both the English and the Spanish version this year.

In addition to the bilingual school play, Mark has been more intentional in his multilingual communications with students and families, as well as providing programs and opportunities for students identified as English Language Learners or bilingual student populations. What I learned about Mark from this conversation was not just his optimistic view of his students, but also the just and democratic-oriented reasons for providing the bilingual and English Language Learners a stage and club to empower themselves and bridge the divide that

sometimes, or oftentimes, separate groups of students. In addition, Orchard has designated a common area of the school, along with a study hall space, for English Language Learners or bilingual student populations with Spanish interpreters available all day to offer or provide additional support. Mark highlighted a new addition to Orchard, during his tenure:

> Our new ELL chair . . . has really taken hold of is trying to give those kids more of a stage here at school. She started a club just last year and had between 60-70 kids show up for this club. They're all in our ELL programming and they do a variety of things. They go on just cultural outings. But just having their own club I think has recognized, has gotten them to recognize that we appreciate them.

Every willing student participates in every activity—even with ifs, ands, or buts. The teachers at Bell High School described how they met the needs of all their students as they engaged with business leaders, attended job shadow opportunities, internships, and conferences, and visited colleges and universities through school trips or camps. The teachers discussed various initiatives or programs that Bell provided and continues to provide its students and offered reasons and rationales:

> Teacher 1: Because you see that they [students] have the ability, but they're selling themselves short, for whatever cultural or whatever's surrounding them.
>
> Teacher 2: And some of them don't have parents.
>
> Teacher 3: Exactly. Society has placed them. Some of them don't have that luxury of a parent or someone that's pushing them in that direction.

The teachers then expanded the conversation and discussed how eye opening many experiences and opportunities have been for their students; in particular, to see different professions and career individuals specific to or related to agriculture and animal sciences in person and not through a glorified or limiting television show:

> Teacher 1: Because I think half of the problem with many kids these days is we're asking them to put themselves in a role that they have no idea what it's like.
>
> Teacher 2: Early, too.

Teacher 3: They have no experience in their family or anything of these types of careers. They get the information from TV shows.

Teacher 4: Right, absolutely. We have to show them the opportunities that are available by actually, when they see the people, they go, "Oh, yeah, I could be one of those," or "I could do that." But they can't make that leap without seeing the people, because it's so foreign to them.

Teacher 5: Even with our science fair.

Teacher 4: We bring in judges from all walks, from university professors to people in the field. And they work one-on-one with the kid when they're doing their science fair projects.

One teacher described the tie ceremonies she organizes every year. She invites alumni or individuals from Greek letter organizations to come in and teach the young men how to tie various varieties of ties, while the young women learn about professional work attire that does not include leggings. A teacher began this event after years of struggling with students coming to school on professional dress days without appropriate attire; in many cases it was due to a lack of experience.

Teacher 1: And then for the last three years I've done tie ceremonies, because I realize that some of the guys, they don't know how to tie a tie, and how, as a teacher, can we expect them, if they don't have a male in the household.

Teacher 2: I didn't know that.

Teacher 3: Yeah.

Teacher 2: I always wondered how they learned for their first [day].

It was from this conversation the teachers described making sure every student had what she/he needed for events, job shadows, Career Day, and conferences with a caveat that they make it work for the students because they are a small school.

Teacher 1: If the kids say they don't have a tie, they'll [Greek letter organizations] leave 50 ties there so whoever doesn't have one, they can have that tie for Career Day or for their job shadow. So the teachers, when they realize that something is missing and a kid doesn't have something, we go in our

> repertoire and start pulling out our resources to make sure that every kid in this building has what they need.
>
> Teacher 2: I think we're small, and that helps a lot. We're really personal with our kids.
>
> Teacher 3: Yeah, absolutely.
>
> Teacher 4: And most kids in this school are comfortable with at least one person that they would come and say, "You know, I don't have the right clothes for this, Miss Grace," or "I don't have the money to pay for that," and so then we can help them. I think there's very few who don't take opportunities because they can't, and we don't know that they can't.
>
> Teacher 1: It's always like if there's something, even like banquet or something like that, I'll say okay, if you participate, I want you to go. If money is a problem, come and see me. So we take our kids kind of personally, especially because of the career pathway model. And like I said, not just that. I know there's a lot of other teachers who—you can see a kid and what they do.

At Orchard High School, the parents spoke about the "treasure of the school:" The openness and supportive environment of all the cultures that come together at Orchard High School both through the work of the principal, courses offered, and the after-school clubs that support their children. One mother described her son's involvement in the French Club:

> My son liked it because he choose, right now he's learning French and he's joining French club, too. They're learning about their culture because it's kind of different. We are a Polish family and this is like still there are differences so and it's good to learn something else. So it's good to find the other culture have different food. So you learning about the cities. You know you learning the language. It's good for the kids. I like it here. And you have many, many different—you can find something for yourself and everybody going to help you.

In my review of school documents, I found that Orchard has 69 after-school clubs for students, not include the sports programs (27 sports are offered for both young women and men). Clubs vary from language-based, culture-based, career based, student interest based (video gaming, movies, ecology, recycling), musical (song writing, marching band, jazz band), peer leadership, and social/emotional groups. The parents highlighted a few of these clubs and argued that there

was something for every student, providing an array of options to the alternative of simply staying at home.

From the teachers I learned about the Culture Club and student mentoring opportunities for young women and in particular young, Latino women. One teacher explained why she and her colleagues believed these opportunities were important for young Latino women: They could "meet other women of color, other women that are, who are immigrants [and] who have similar backgrounds and have achieved college success as well as career success." Another teacher expanded on her comments:

> It's kind of like clouding them um to see what they can be. Many of our kids if you ask them what they want to be. Lawyer, teachers, you know, very limited to what they see. But, they don't see people like among 3D printing and I don't know, some of the ones whom I saw, um. The one that I was [at a local university] on leadership, he and his wife are African American and our girls totally engaged with them, because they saw that the whole world's not White.

I found that the supportive and intentional environment at Orchard to support all students demonstrated many elements of Kincheloe and Steinberg's (1995) social justice framework, but what was even more interesting was the theme of trust that arose during my principal conversations and with the teachers during our focus group meeting. Trust arose out of many conversations about the role of parents; this quote from a teacher concisely described the theme:

> I think sometimes there's a misconception, and that's just natural, that maybe our parents aren't involved because they don't want to be and it's not a conscious choice to not be involved. It's because they have other kids to raise and working not just one, but two jobs, so if they're [not] at parent teacher conferences, it's not because they don't care, it's because they either are working or they have already put their trust in us and they would like to be there, but they can't necessarily.

Mark repeated a similar sentiment in one of our conversations about the backgrounds of the Orchard families and their expectations and understanding about school and the role of teachers; in other words, a potential incongruence between the expectations of the school and the

expectations of the families (discussed in research question two). Building on that idea, a teacher explained:

> The parents of our students put the trust in us, you know, at Orchard. They trust that we are going to make good decisions and sometimes that's a little difficult on our end because you don't want to interfere with culture. Our parents are very, very hardworking; many of them two parent families, both Mom and Dad work, they are usually lower-paid positions. We were just at a meeting about Naviance and Jade [current counselor at Orchard] was an Orchard student from a Polish immigrant family and she said: "The parents don't understand because they're so busy working, that's why they have you. So that you can help their kids make good decisions."

As principals, Ryan and Mark have demonstrated their encouragement, celebration, and commitment to all students, but in particular the cultural assets all students bring to their schools. Diversity was a long discussion for both principals, and although not the focus in its entirety in this study, I encouraged the dialogue because it became the thread that wove many of my questions together into this case study report and my analysis. The description of one of the schools by one of the parents as a popular musical and television program, *High School Musical*, also resonated with my review and analysis of the interview data. In other words, diversity was not just theater, but preparation for the world students encountered and would encounter as maturing adults in college settings, workplace environments, or as our future leaders. Although encouraging, both schools, and possibly any school in the country, continue to struggle with diversity and the potential unintended consequences or limitations to policy decisions.

Summary

This chapter described each of my research study's findings with cross-case analysis across the two high schools included in this research. Both principals mirrored a mindset that regardless of their school's location or the composition of the student population, their job was two-fold: (a) create a high school environment as a place to provide all students with a flexible path to follow their passions, and (b) it was incumbent upon them to move students from their

starting point to a point that would garner them future success and independence. Yet, as is likely true with any school, limitations and challenges are evident and require further investigation. In the next chapter, I further explore these conclusions and offer a discussion of my study's results with implications on further research and policy.

Chapter 6

Summary, Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

This study examined the leadership practices of high school principals as they advocated for and created a culture focused on college and career readiness for students from historically underserved populations. The study sought to understand whether social justice ideologies influenced the philosophies and actions of the principals as they created a college and career readiness culture while embracing the cultural assets of students from historically underserved populations. A multi-case study design was used to investigate the practices of two public high school principals, to identify and describe the characteristics that they shared or did not share, and to build knowledge. I employed purposeful sampling to identify and select case sites (Maxwell, 1998) that addressed the study's problem and purpose (Merriam, 2009).

The two case study sites were high schools in the metropolitan area of a large Midwestern city, with enrollments of 600 students at Bell High School and 1,800 students at Orchard High School. Data were collected between October 2014 and May 2015. Ryan was in his eighth year as Bell High School principal and Mark was completing his third year at Orchard High School. Data collection methods included interviews of the principals and focus group interviews with selected teachers, students, and parents/legal guardians, observations, and document review. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. How does a high school principal advocate for and support students from underserved populations in accessing postsecondary opportunities in college and career?
2. What system or structures are in place to facilitate a college and career ready pathway for all students, but in particular students from underserved populations?
3. How do the school's faculty and staff build upon or embrace the cultural assets students from underserved populations bring to school as they and their families prepare for postsecondary opportunities?

Findings

The findings of my study are detailed below according to the research questions.

Research Question One: How Does a Secondary School Principal Advocate for and Support Students From Underserved Populations in Accessing Postsecondary Opportunities in College and Career?

Data analysis revealed three major themes: (a) it begins with the mindset of the principal, (b) principals strive for equitable outcomes for all students through their leadership, and (c) principals ground their advocacy in interpersonal and pedagogical relationships. For both Ryan at Bell High School and Mark at Orchard High School, their mindsets began with a direct statement: These are our students and our job is to provide them with a path that leads them to a college and a career, but not necessarily in that order. The principals' optimistic views were both reassuring and humbling: reassuring in the sense that there are school leaders who believe children's opportunities in life are limitless when educators combine justice oriented values with excellence in teaching and learning for all, and humbling that there are school leaders who do not view students through a deficit lens.

Students in both schools were viewed as unique individuals when they arrived at high school with whatever skills they possessed; the principals and teachers worked collaboratively to move individual students from an initial point of college and career exploration on the high school trajectory to a college and/or career path at high school graduation. To support this academic growth, both principals built relationships and forged business and higher education partnerships that set in motion learning opportunities that could catapult their students into roles and/or future job positions by opening their world to college and career fields. Whether through the involvement of business Advisory Boards, alignment of curriculum with postsecondary

institutions, or creating bridges of understanding with parents, both principals have found or are discovering structures that function effectively in their schools, for their students, and for families.

Research Question Two: What System or Structures Are in Place to Facilitate a College and Career Ready Pathway for All Students, but in Particular Students From Underserved Populations?

Three major themes were revealed: (a) principals create a career pathway structure in their schools that builds a culture focused on college and careers, (b) counselors and student support staff align their activities with the career pathway structure, and (c) exposing students to college and career experiences and opportunities contextualizes/reinforces what is being taught in classrooms. Although both schools approached career pathways in different ways, they each provided students with experiential courses to support their preparation for college and careers. Through their involvement in selected pathways, students earned industry certifications that qualified them for immediate entry into the workforce or provided transfer credits at postsecondary institutions upon graduation. Bell High School built its career pathway around a singular career field, agriculture, while Orchard High School offered its students courses in various career focus areas.

The career pathway structure was more than just curricular and teacher led: It encompassed the entire school environment, including the counseling and student support staff that provided programming to support students and their families through college and career planning. Counselors organized college fairs, career fairs, college application sessions, financial aid sessions, internship support, and "how-to" lunch sessions for students that covered topics such as writing college essays, attending college fairs, and working with professionals in their

internships or job shadowing opportunities. In addition, both high schools offered students internships, job shadowing experiences, and experiential opportunities outside of the classrooms as well as career, college, or international experiences with little to no cost to students. These experiences and opportunities were made possible by the foresight and leadership of the principals and the business and industry relationships they formed and encouraged with the support of their teachers.

Research Question Three: How Do the School's Faculty and Staff Build Upon the Cultural Assets Students From Underserved Populations Bring to School as They and Their Families Prepare for Postsecondary Opportunities?

Data revealed two themes across both schools: (a) student and family diversity is integral and unifying*;* and (b) every willing student participates in every activity—even with ifs, ands, or buts. At both schools, diversity was cherished, treasured, and acted as a means of bringing everyone together. Parents described how open and welcoming the school and faculty were to diversity and how culturally attuned the school was to students and families. A mother, during one of my focus groups, mentioned the musical and movie, *High School Musical*, explaining how she made sense of her daughter's description of Bell High School and the diversity of the student body. The mother described her initial concerns and anxieties over her daughter's first integrated school experience; yet, her concerns diminished as her daughter began sharing stories of friends she was meeting and learning about their different cultural experiences. In the case of Orchard, the theme of *High School Musical* actually came about in the form of a play that the school had held the year before my study commenced with a student who had recently emigrated from a Spanish-speaking country with limited English proficiency. The student was immediately cast in the school's bilingual play by a teacher, who used the opportunity to help the student

develop relationships with other students as she assimilated into her new environment. Although a very simplistic act on the part of the teacher, it was more than just welcoming one student: It is the culture of Orchard. A culture that is also demonstrated in the multilingual newsletters and multilingual video broadcasts and messaging that Orchard produces as a mechanism to ensure every student and family has access to all information.

These examples also build on the second theme: the participation of all students in all activities, with no reservations. The culture at both schools gently and empathically assured students that the faculty and administration were there to support and assist them in every way possible to be successful and meet challenges and opportunities that were provided. Bell teachers highlighted one area, professional dress attire for students during job shadow opportunities and internships. At Orchard, teachers described high levels of trust the parents and families had bestowed upon them to prepare their children for college and career opportunities. They explained that trust was an honor and were quick to emphasize that it did not serve to take the place of parents being expected to participate in their children's learning; parents were involved in all ways they could or knew how to be involved or supportive. At Bell, the theme of trust came in the form of care and empathy on the part of the teachers and principal, as well as on the part of the students who felt they could ask a faculty member for support or assistance to meet the academic or career-based expectations set in place by the school and/or teachers.

Discussion

By combining the theory of social justice with school leadership, I argued that principals can increase the academic achievement of all students through equitable access to a school's curriculum and programs based on the needs of all students once opportunity gaps or barriers have been identified. By providing all students with career and college experiences through a

career pathway structure, high school principals can create conditions in schools that can lead to postsecondary opportunities. The end result, once school leaders have critiqued their curriculum, programs, practices, and policies within a social justice framework, is a school wherein safe, inclusive, and caring relationships will prepare *every* and *any* students to participate in the game of school and life (see Figure 23).

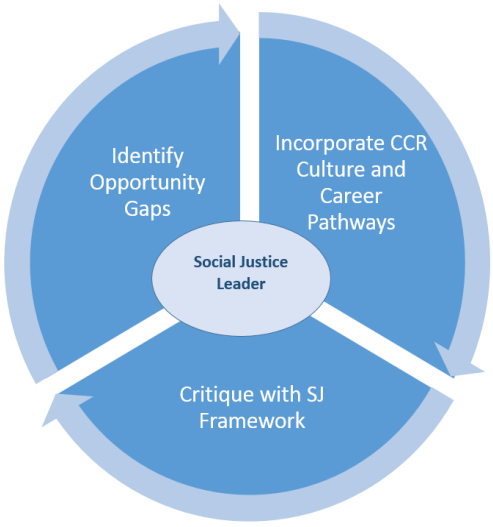

Figure 23. Conceptual leadership model to create schools that provide equitable access to college and career readiness for all students through a social justice framework.

My approach is necessary and informative for three reasons: (a) to provide empirical evidence of social justice principles in action; (b) to provide a social justice framework or litmus test (Shields, 2004) to guide school leaders in their beliefs, decisions, and practices as they create a college and career readiness culture in their schools; and (c) to provide principals and school leaders with a research-based framework that will promote a more just and equitable education for all students while they address daily challenges such as budget reductions, violence, poverty, limited high quality resources such as teachers, support staff, books, professional development, technology, or curriculum, and potentially deficit ideologies. Next, I discuss the findings of my study within Conley's (2010) four-dimensional framework and principles, wherein he argued

that social capital can break down access barriers to postsecondary education and/or careers before highlighting a limitation to his model: the lack of equity and access by historically underserved students in their everyday school experiences.

Social justice leadership in schools. One finding from my research was the deliberate and mindful approach of principals as they created conditions and relationships in high schools that could prepare *all* students to attain academic success and equitable access to postsecondary opportunities. At Bell and Orchard High Schools, principals Ryan and Mark were deliberate and mindful in their approaches to establishing school structures that could prepare *all* students to attain similar levels of academic success by attending to the needs of those who may find themselves not achieving academically, feeling marginalized, or potentially disadvantaged in learning opportunities. The deliberate and mindful actions of both principals stemmed from the mindset they each brought to their schools and their roles; their job was to academically prepare all students to meet benchmarks set by their state board of education while preparing them for postsecondary access and success in college and careers. From the students' perspective, this mindfulness empowered *every* student to participate in and take responsibility for their own learning by feeling capable, comfortable, and competent. In addition, the career pathway model or approach laid out a path to college and career that *any* student could choose because they were knowledgeable, aware, prepared (academically and socially), experienced, supported, and empowered.

For both principals, I found they held themselves to an accountability or outcome standard that did not end senior year; it ended when their students entered and exited a postsecondary program, it ended when their students embarked on a career path they had chosen, and in many cases it ended when students came back as teachers or role models for the younger

classes. Yet, interim data or student data based on graduation outcomes, for example, was not discussed or shared by either principal nor was disaggregated data discussed by subgroups. The lack of a data discussion in its support or critique of the numerous policies enacted or supported by both principals may be concerning, but analysis and review of student data was an overall limitation of this study.

College and career readiness and a career pathway structure. A second major theme from my findings is the establishment of career pathway structure in both schools that builds a culture focused on careers, colleges, and postsecondary learning opportunities simultaneously and for *all* students—albeit a more formalized career pathway structure at Bell than at Orchard High School (Figure 24). The practices and behaviors of both Ryan and Mark provide evidence and support of this major theme. Both principals implemented and supported a career model that could provide their students with industry-recognized certifications that could lead them into immediate jobs, a career, or transfer into credit-bearing opportunities at a postsecondary institution. Although the career courses offered at both high schools did not encompass the entire array of career fields, both schools built on their physical facilities to create a learning environment that was based in preparation for both college and career. Facilities aside, the passion and drive of the teachers I met through my focus group meetings was the key that connected students to careers. In addition, many teachers had prior career backgrounds in the particular career fields they taught and were enthusiastic to share with their students. The college and career focus was not only present in classrooms but also in the hallways, school assemblies, career and college fairs, and multiple other opportunities to help students prepare for both the college application process and career internship opportunities. The rich college and career culture at both schools is also characteristic of the optimism shared and experienced by all.

Identify opportunity gaps	Not formalized, but evidence of consideration in policy, organizational structure, and programmatic changes	Not formalized, but evidence of consideration in policy, organizational structure, and programmatic changes
Incorporate CCR Culture (Conley 2009, 2010)		
Principle 1: Create and maintain a college-going culture in school	Yes	Yes
Principle 2: Create a core academic program aligned with and leading to college readiness by the end of twelfth grade	Yes	Yes
Principle 3: Teach key self-management skills and academic behaviors and expect students to use them	Not observed	Not observed
Principle 4: Make college and careers real by helping students manage the complexity of preparing for and applying to postsecondary education	Yes	Yes
Principle 5: Create assignments and grading policies that more closely approximate college expectations each successive year of high school	Not observed	Not observed
Principle 6: Make the senior year meaningful and appropriately challenging	Yes	Yes
Principle 7: Build partnerships with and connections to postsecondary programs and institutions	Yes	Yes
Incorporate Career Pathways (Illinois Career Cluster Framework)	Yes	No
Critique with Social Justice Framework (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1995)	Not formalized, but evidence of consideration in policy, organizational structure, and programmatic changes	Not formalized, but evidence of consideration in policy, organizational structure, and programmatic changes

Figure 24. Comparison of case study sites according to conceptual leadership model.

Conley's conceptions of college and career readiness in schools. In this study, I found evidence of nearly all of Conley's (2010) apprenticeship principles in action at Bell and Orchard

High Schools (Figure 24). Specifically, the establishment of a college-going culture by displaying college banners, organizing college and career fairs, and holding assemblies to celebrate college acceptances (principle 1); alignment of the Common Core State Standards and ACT's College Readiness Skills to each school's curriculum (principle 2); instituting a career pathway structure to prepare students for careers and college through rigorous coursework (principle 4); career internship opportunities, capstone projects, and advanced placement and dual enrollment opportunities (principle 6); and established partnerships with postsecondary institutions and businesses (principle 7). Two principles were not directly observed or identified through data review: (a) teaching key self-management skills and academic behaviors (principle 3) and (b) assignments and grading policies that approximated college expectations (principle 5).

Implications

An intended outcome of my study was to provide principals, school leaders, and those aspiring to the role an action agenda to be mindful, deliberate, and equitable as they lead schools and create paths to college and career readiness for *all* students regardless of their cultural, financial, familial, and social backgrounds. Although the statement sounds simplistic, the reality is that we continue to observe gaps in achievement and opportunity among student groups, we witness educational loss or opportunity loss among student groups, and access and persistence data in postsecondary institutions are not representative of our nation's growing diversity.

The onus of these challenges, gaps, or losses, however, does not fall squarely on the shoulders of only high school principals: It is a systemic failure on the part of the entire PK-20 education landscape. However, the focus of my dissertation study limits my understanding to what I observed, heard, and understood within the context of two metropolitan high schools with demographically diverse and majority minority student populations organized around careers.

Yet, even with this limitation, I witnessed the potential offered by two schools and their principals in beginning to address the systemic gaps and losses inequitably and unjustly suffered by students historically underserved by our education system. To me, the potential became apparent with two statements that I paraphrased from over 200 pages of transcripts:

1. Our job as school leaders is to move our students from their starting point to a point that will garner them independence and success.
2. High school is a place to provide all students with a flexible path to follow their passions and the means to circumvent limitations others may impose.

These statements highlight the mindset and ideology of both principals in this study as they led their schools with empathy and optimism with a steadfast focus on equitable access to everything the school had to offer *all* students while empowering students, families, and staff members with knowledge, awareness, and opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning.

One finding from this study was the deliberate and mindful approach of the two principals as they created conditions and relationships in high schools that could prepare *all* students to attain academic success and equitable access to postsecondary opportunities through the lens of social justice. The reality is that school principals and those in leadership positions are tasked with oversight or managerial tasks to ensure that their teachers are teaching an academic curriculum benchmarked to learning standards and assessing student learning: This is the daily and yearly routine of schooling. Principals also adhere to professional standards just like many other professions. In the case of education leadership, 10 national professional standards all begin with the phrase "Effective educational leaders . . ." and encompass the following categories: Mission, vision, and core values; ethics and professional norms; equity and cultural responsiveness; curriculum, instruction, and assessment; community of care and support for students; professional capacity of school personnel; professional community for teachers and

staff; meaningful engagement of families and community; operations and management; and school improvement (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Based on these professional standards, one would argue that principals and school leaders have met the requirements for providing all students, teachers and staff, and families with access to education or in other words—that is school. We can also argue that principals, school leaders, and teachers prepare all students to attain academic success according to their abilities or learning classification—gifted, honors, advanced placement, special education, English Language Learners, regular track, college-prep track, career-prep track, and a variety of other designations. A few of these learning classifications are mandated by law while others are rooted in historical foundations and some classifications have evolved to meet new trends in education.

My concern however, is that the classification system of students has led to a tenuous condition in schools that have segregated students into academic and non-academic tracks, created silos of teachers or academic departments, and have created a culture of "just going through the motions" of school that is disjointed and disconnected. In other words, school has become a place that on a micro level is a place of teaching and learning for students who want to or can learn with minimal support and yet, has lost the macro view or the large picture of what education should be providing *all* students equitably—"the capacity to choose, the power to act to attain one's purposes, and the ability to help transform a world lived in common with others" (Green, 1988, p. 32). Green's quote sounds the alarm for educators to provide an education that can make all students "citizens of the free world" (p. 32) or meet their own potential and not one misguided by learning classifications, judgments about intellectual and physical abilities, culture, race, social identity, or socio-economic factors.

Equitable access to education requires more than a punch-list of outcomes or evaluative measures of both students and teachers. It requires a critical dialogue of how we are providing every student with equal access to academic knowledge, which students are mastering that knowledge and which are not, what is the knowledge that is being taught, and why the knowledge is not being consumed by all students at equitable rates. This critical dialogue is uncomfortable and many educators may find themselves avoiding the conversation or its implications due to their own biases, personal experiences, or naiveté. School leaders may consider the lack of knowledge or the inadequate training of educators in theories of cultural diversity and social justice and current research on career and technical education and college readiness as barriers to dialogue and reform of education practices that are not meeting the needs of all students equitably.

Building on the first theme, the creation of a career pathway structure in schools that builds a culture focused on careers, colleges, and postsecondary learning opportunities simultaneously and for *all* students must be highlighted. This study of two different high schools' career and college readiness models provides a starting point for actualizing a fairly seamless, socially just, and academically and career rich learning environment for all students, but in particular students from historically underserved populations. The models at Bell and Orchard High Schools are far from perfect or devoid of challenges or limitations and were not created overnight; yet, both models were led by visionary leaders that challenged the role of high school education and the outcomes it was producing. To both principals, high school was about providing their students with a path to life, financial and social independence, and becoming contributing members to society at-large. Most importantly my study found that both principals

did not view diversity, whether race, class, culture, language, gender orientation, or financial, as a barrier to success, but a unifying asset.

Previous research has found that high schools are plagued with a stratified education system that continues to provide a rigorous curriculum for perceived high-achieving students in a college or career track and a general or vocational track for students perceived to be low achieving (Oakes, 1983, 2005; Oakes & Guiton, 1995). This unresolved struggle, wrought with critical questions and socially unjust practices, also produces negative economic consequences with regard to employment opportunities, earning income, creating wealth, living longer and healthier lives, and home ownership for students that have been denied access to essential academic knowledge and skills (Belfield & Levin, 2007; Wilson, 1996). Federal legislation under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Grant (Perkins IV) of 2006 requires integration of academic content and knowledge into career and technical education programs; yet, federal legislation cannot be forced upon school systems. According to Epperson (2012), Perkins IV vertically aligns career preparation between high schools and postsecondary schools, which ideally can prepare young adults and adults for high-skill labor and high-wage employment and potentially meet our current and future labor needs while providing living wages.

The state of Illinois created its own career cluster model as a way to vertically align and close the information gap between high school and postsecondary opportunities within 16 career cluster areas (Jankowski et al., 2009). Yet, only one school in my study had received professional development and implementation support of the model in their school, whereas the other noted that the model was mentioned at a workshop but had not introduced the topic to the faculty or incorporated structural changes to its school. The lack of incorporation or integration

of a career cluster model in high school is perplexing when published studies and literature and to a small extent the findings of this dissertation case study highlight the benefits and success of career and college integration and preparation in high schools. High school educators may be inadvertently limiting students' access or awareness of career options by potentially focusing on only core academic subjects or remedial courses instead of embedding career development or job training within the core academic subjects or as stand-alone courses. For some students, high school may be their last formal education opportunity, for a variety of reasons, but also a last opportunity to extend a student's interest and/or potential.

Recommendations for Practice, Policy, and Future Research

Based upon the finding from this study, the following recommendations are offered for current and future practitioners, policy writers or analysts, and future researchers or doctoral students.

1. Consider the conceptual leadership model presented in this study or an equity-based improvement model to begin dialogue around meeting the needs of all students, equitably, and building a culture focused on college and career readiness. It is essential for schools to incorporate a continuous, cyclical process that identifies opportunity gaps, incorporates a college and career readiness culture through a career pathway structure, and critiques the process, policy, program, or structure through the lens of social justice. Although my conceptual leadership model is focused on a college and career readiness culture with a career pathway structure, the leadership model is applicable to any theme, program, or focus.

Powerful, research-based equity oriented continuous improvement models have been developed by the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California (see Harris & Bensimon, 2007) and the Office of Community College Research and Leadership at the

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (see Bragg, Bennett, & McCambly, 2016). These models should be reviewed and tailored for use by school leaders as a means of examining opportunity gaps or barriers within the school and the college and career readiness model or practices in place to encourage and invoke critical dialogue through a social justice framework.

2. Conduct equity audits as part of school and district data conversations. Equity audits (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Scott, 2001) can be a powerful leadership tool to open lines of communication among multiple stakeholders to explore and understand inequities that hinder access and academic achievement among student groups. An equity audit is a leadership tool that focuses or limits data analysis or review to a specific focus area, for example, to reveal gaps or weaknesses or highlight areas of improvement (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Once inequities are identified, stakeholders can begin the process of deconstructing the inequities or opportunity gaps and re-creating structures, policies, programs, or curricular changes so that the classroom, school, department, or district can be mindful and deliberate in providing all students with a more just and equitable education. Equity audits can also be useful in identifying opportunity gaps as part of my conceptual model.

The following recommendations are offered for policymakers.

1. Create school- or district-specific policies modeled upon state- or research-based career pathway models or programs of study at the high school level. Many states, in addition to incorporating a national model, have developed career pathway models or career-focused programs of study that align curriculum and degree programs between high school and postsecondary institutions. As noted earlier, Illinois has adopted an Illinois Career Cluster Framework (Jankowski et al., 2009), which is used to develop career pathways in both high schools and postsecondary institutions. States with well-designed, articulated career cluster and

pathway models can provide a foundation to any high school seeking to integrate a career-themed focus into existing courses instead of isolating Career and Technical Education programs or courses into stand-alone entities. It is essential for school district educators to begin career exploration and conversations early in high school, and even as early as elementary and middle school, and to provide their students with experiential or exploratory career opportunities so that students and their families can work together to structure their high school plan and begin preparing for additional years of study, financial considerations, and exploring postsecondary institutions that meet the needs of the student, family, and future career.

2. Consider adopting Conley's (2009, 2010) college and career framework with critical regard for limitations highlighted in this dissertation study into school- or district-based career and college readiness policies. Conley's Four Keys to College and Career Readiness and Seven Apprenticeship Principles are based on 20 years of field research with numerous studies and reports published through his non-profit research center, with findings that suggest success or improvement in schools throughout the country. Conley's keys and principles provide a starting point for schools, districts, practitioners, or researchers to consider when considering, evaluating, or designing their own college and career frameworks within the limitations highlighted in this study.

3. Schools of Education and/or professional development providers should incorporate the ideology of social justice leadership theory into all courses or professional development opportunities. Social justice theory should not be relegated or confined to introductory courses in education theory or advanced level graduate courses, but instead should be foundational to every course or professional development opportunity. Every inquiry, topic,

theory, or content must and should begin by questioning whether the education being provided to students is just, democratic, optimistic, empathic, and equitable.

The findings from this study highlight the need for current and aspiring educators to be knowledgeable of social justice leadership theory for two reasons: (a) to recognize leadership theories in action and navigate accordingly whether in their classroom or school; and (b) to implement social justice theory in classrooms and in leadership roles they embrace because the concepts, practices, and reflective elements are critical to creating just and equitable learning environments for all students.

The following recommendations are offered for future research.

1. Additional research is needed to identify high schools that have either (a) effectively promoted college or career readiness for all students or (b) are led by principals who have successfully incorporated a social justice leadership theory in their practice along with a critical review on student achievement data. Shaping such a study may uncover additional findings or reinforce the applicability of a social justice framework in improving the academic achievement among all student groups and creating more equitable schools. The more studies and literature published portraying transformative practices in schools that close opportunity gaps and improve the academic landscape for all students, whether in early childhood education, secondary schools, or postsecondary institutions, may provide the necessary impetus to reframe education policy. In addition, such studies may lead to a paradigm shift on behalf of policymakers, school district leaders, and state boards of education that does more than just identify achievement or opportunity gaps by student groups, but provides research-based models or frameworks for schools and districts to use as they deconstruct inequities highlighted by accountability measures, dialogue about inherent power and privilege

in school context, and then rebuild school structures that equitably meet the needs of all students while embracing the wealth of social and cultural capital in the community-at-large.

2. Additional research could examine the roles of school superintendents and other central office leaders in promoting college/career access to all students. A future research study should seek to understand how the district superintendent or central office leader influences policy or practices of school-based principals as building leaders create a culture of college and career readiness within their schools.

3. Additional research should examine effective high school and postsecondary collaboration that facilitate students' seamless transitions into postsecondary education. Examining such a relationship/s could aide or further support integration of a career cluster model in high schools and provide evidence of career attainment once certifications or degree requirements are met. Furthermore, providing concrete evidence of vertical alignment of coursework between a high school and postsecondary institution of learning will further strengthen the demand for reform in career and college readiness policies.

Conclusion

My own personal orientation led me to question the role, ideology, and leadership practices of principals as they created and supported conditions in schools that may either reproduce or perpetuate social inequities (Bourdieu, 1977) through a very narrow focus—college and career readiness for historically underserved students. This perspective was particularly relevant to my study, as I argued that building college and career readiness for students from historically underserved populations is grounded in social justice theory (Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Farrell, 1999; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1995; Marshall & Ward, 2004; McKenzie et al., 2008; Sapon-Shevin, 2003; Shields, 2004, 2014) and led by a

school leader whose inclusive practices address issues involving race, ethnicity, class, and culture (Bogotch, 2002; Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Larson & Murtadha, 2003; Marshall & Ward, 2004; McKenzie et al., 2008; Riehl, 2000; Sapon-Shevin, 2003; Shields, 2004, 2014; Theoharis 2004, 2008). Furthermore, examination of school practices and policies within a social justice framework permits critical reflection and dialogue and shifts schools and leaders away from "pathologizing practices and deficit thinking" (Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2005, p. 3).

This multi-site case study and findings suggest that school leaders bring to their role a justice-oriented mindset that lays the foundation of school changes that will build a path for *all* students to gain academic knowledge and career skills that will lead them to postsecondary access and success. But it was more than just laying a foundation and building a path—it was mindful and deliberately planned by looking forward to the future needs of students and backward mapping the steps to the first day students enter high school. This practice then creates a roadmap or path for students that begins on their first day in high school, connects it to one or several of their personal interests or future life goal/s, and then develops a trajectory to a future career—all prior to high school graduation. Through this journey, mindset, and foundation, justice-oriented leaders guide, influence, and empower those around them, teachers, staff members, parents, and students, through interpersonal and educational relationships to continuously strive for their next step along the path to a student's economic and social interdependence.

One successful and powerful example of preparing *all* students for postsecondary access and success is to embed future career interests or goals into the academic scope and sequence of the high school curriculum through a career pathway structure or model. In other words, preparing students for both academic and career success is not mutually exclusive, but inclusive.

The principals identified in this study built or were building a high school culture that focused both on college and career, at the same time, with a deliberate and mindful attempt to not isolate or pre-determine paths for students. In other words, both principals, along with their faculty and staff, were mindful of exposing *all* students to college and career experiences and/or opportunities by contextualizing those experiences or opportunities within the curriculum, classroom, school setting, or out-of-school learning extensions. Not only does this allow all students access to career and college experiences, but it also permits students to consider or develop new interests in a protective, no-cost environment.

The focus on preparing *all* students for postsecondary access and success is critical given our nation's racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. Arguably, though, this presents challenges for educators and school leaders (Beachum & McCray, 2004; Madsen & Mabokela, 2005) as well as students, families, and teachers. Diversity, defined as "the variation of social and cultural identities among people working together in a defined setting" (Cox, 2001, p. 3), can create tension in a school whereby one social or cultural group of people is deemed dominant and systems or structures within the school promote or enhance the dominant culture. Societally, as a democratic nation, there is a responsibility to advocate and encourage appreciation of differences across racial, ethnic, class, gender, and class lines—this idea is particularly crucial in schools as educators prepare students to become productive members of society and citizens (Dewey, 1960; Glickman, 2004). Although not a core focus of the study, diversity was discussed at length by both principals and their faculties, students, and families and became a thread that wove both the study's analysis and findings. Student and family diversity at both schools was either described as foundational to its success or rich and perceived as a strength; in both cases, the cultural and

socioeconomic backgrounds of students and families were regarded as assets and unifying the overall student, family, and school environments.

Transforming the lives of children through education as envisioned by Freire (1998) within a social realm that encompasses the school and community at large requires a leadership model that links academic achievement, social justice, and equity to school leadership. Time is of the essence as we race to ensure that all students are meeting the benchmarks of a formal curriculum equitably and inclusively and become "citizens of the free world—having the capacity to choose, the power to act to attain one's purposes, and the ability to help transform a world lived in common with others" (Greene, 1988, p. 32).

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Appendix A

Principal Participant Screener

Principal:_____ [PARTICIPANT SCREENER] January 13, 2013

School Name: _____

1. Please describe your school and your students' postsecondary achievements.
2. Please confirm your school's demographic and achievement data that I pulled from Illinois' Interactive Report Card website.
3. Please describe how you have improved college or career readiness for your students, in particular students from underrepresented populations.
4. How do you define college readiness?
5. How do you define career readiness?

6. Please describe your professional career and the number of years you have served as principal of your current school.
7. Please describe your race or ethnicity.
8. What values guide your leadership practice?
9. What motivated you to become a principal?
   (if principal mentions social justice, ask for a definition)
10. Do you consider yourself a social justice leader?
11. Please define what you think it means to be a social justice leader.

12. Please provide an example or examples of changes you have made to your school to become more socially just and focused on college and career readiness for students from underrepresented populations.

13. Do you have any questions for me about this study?
14. Are you willing to participate in my study?
15. Do you know of another high school principal that has improved college or career readiness for their students, in particular students from underrepresented populations?

Researcher: complete school data prior to phone interview

School demographics:
Student achievement data:

- ☐ College Readiness
- ☐ ACT
- ☐ PSAE

Appendix B

University of Illinois Internal Review Board (IRB) Approval

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Office of Vice Chancellor for Research
Institutional Review Board
528 East Green Street
Suite 203
Champaign, IL 61820

February 27, 2013

Donald Hackmann
Ed Organization and Leadership
334 Education Bldg
1310 South Sixth St
M/C 708

RE: *Urban Secondary School Principals' Influence in College and Career Readiness for Students from Underrepresented Populations: Practices that Build upon Capital within School*
IRB Protocol Number: 13502

Dear Dr. Hackmann:

Thank you for submitting the completed IRB application form for your project entitled *Urban Secondary School Principals' Influence in College and Career Readiness for Students from Underrepresented Populations: Practices that Build upon Capital within School*. Your project was assigned Institutional Review Board (IRB) Protocol Number 13502 and reviewed. It has been determined that the research activities described in this application meet the criteria for exemption at 45CFR46.101(b)(1).

This determination of exemption only applies to the research study as submitted. **Exempt protocols are approved for a maximum of three years.** Please note that additional modifications to your project need to be submitted to the IRB for review and exemption determination or approval before the modifications are initiated.

We appreciate your conscientious adherence to the requirements of human subjects research. If you have any questions about the IRB process, or if you need assistance at any time, please feel free to contact me or the IRB Office, or visit our website at http://www.irb.illinois.edu.

Sincerely,

Dustin D. Yocum

Dustin L. Yocum, Human Subjects Research Exempt Specialist, Institutional Review Board

c: Carmen Gioiosa

APPROVED
FEB 27 2013
INST REVIEW BD

telephone (217) 333-2670 • *fax* (217) 333-0405 • *email* IRB@illinois.edu

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Office of Vice Chancellor for Research

Institutional Review Board
528 East Green Street
Suite 203
Champaign, IL 61820

February 27, 2013

Donald Hackmann
Ed Organization and Leadership
334 Education Bldg
1310 South Sixth St
M/C 708

RE: *Urban Secondary School Principals' Influence in College and Career Readiness for Students from Underrepresented Populations: Practices that Build upon Capital within School*
IRB Protocol Number: 13502

Dear Dr. Hackmann:

Thank you for submitting the completed IRB application form for your project entitled *Urban Secondary School Principals' Influence in College and Career Readiness for Students from Underrepresented Populations: Practices that Build upon Capital within School.* Your project was assigned Institutional Review Board (IRB) Protocol Number 13502 and reviewed. It has been determined that the research activities described in this application meet the criteria for exemption at 45CFR46.101(b)(1).

This determination of exemption only applies to the research study as submitted. **Exempt protocols are approved for a maximum of three years.** Please note that additional modifications to your project need to be submitted to the IRB for review and exemption determination or approval before the modifications are initiated.

We appreciate your conscientious adherence to the requirements of human subjects research. If you have any questions about the IRB process, or if you need assistance at any time, please feel free to contact me or the IRB Office, or visit our website at http://www.irb.illinois.edu.

Sincerely,

Dustin L. Yocum, Human Subjects Research Exempt Specialist, Institutional Review Board

c: Carmen Gioiosa

APPROVED
FEB 27 2013
INST REVIEW BD

telephone (217) 333-2670 • *fax* (217) 333-0405 • *email* IRB@illinois.edu

Appendix C

Informed Consent Forms

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership

College of Education
351 Education Building
1310 South Sixth Street
Champaign, IL 61820

Dissertation Study: Urban Secondary School Principals' Influence in College and Career Readiness for Students from Underrepresented Populations: Practices that Build upon Capital within Schools

INFORMED CONSENT – District Superintendent

[Name of school] has been selected to participate in a doctoral study that is facilitated by Dr. Donald Hackmann and Ms. Carmen Gioiosa from the University of Illinois. This study has been approved by the University of Illinois' Institutional Review Board (IRB) and district's Research Review Board (RRB). The purpose of this study will be to explore and understand the leadership practices of secondary school principals that have created a college and career readiness pathway for students from underrepresented populations in a large urban city. The study seeks also to understand whether social justice ideologies influenced the philosophy of the urban principals as they built upon the cultural assets students from underrepresented populations brought to schools to enhance their college and career opportunities. This study will help provide valuable insights into the creation and support of a college and career readiness framework that has proven successful with students from underrepresented populations.

To assist with our understanding of leadership practices that build upon the cultural assets students bring to school and in fostering their postsecondary opportunities, it is important for the researchers to engage in some research activities. The data collection for this study will consist of the following: (a) conducting a face-to-face interview with the principal, (b) observation of the principal during a school walk-through, in meetings, and/or during classroom walk-throughs, (c) a school faculty focus group interview, (d) a student focus group interview, (e) a parent/legal guardian focus group interview, and (f) a review and examination of documents that pertain to the school site including, but not limited to student data.

Should you choose to participate, the principal will participate in a face-to-face interview, which should last no longer than 90 minutes. The researcher would like to observe the principal for at least two school days in meetings and/or during classroom walk-throughs in addition to reviewing and examining documents that pertain to the school site. The researcher will take notes related to principals' practices and behaviors in supporting a college and career readiness framework for all students, but in particular students from underrepresented populations. The researcher would also like to schedule focus group interviews with school faculty, students, and parents/legal guardians that should last no longer than 90 minutes during non-instructional school time, with the exception of parent/legal guardian interviews.

To protect confidentiality of the participants, no personally identifying information will be written about the faculty or students during the note-taking process. The notes from any observation will be kept secure and the results will only be reported in the aggregate. The field notes will be transcribed, removing any personally identifiable information and using pseudonyms. All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed with all identifying information removed to protect confidentiality of all participants. Participant responses will be kept secure and they will receive a copy of the transcript by email attachment or postal mail to double-check the information, and they may be contacted by telephone, email, or postal mail for clarification of their interview responses, if necessary.

Allowing the individuals to participation in this research study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your professional employment in any way or your relations with the University of Illinois. You may elect to terminate this study if at any time you begin to feel uncomfortable about the experience. We do not anticipate any risk to this study greater than normal life and we anticipate that the results will increase our understanding of effective leadership practices in secondary schools that build upon the cultural assets students bring to school in furthering their postsecondary opportunities. This information will be used as part of a doctoral

dissertation and may be shared in a conference presentation or publication. No personally identifying information will be included in any presentation, proposal, or publication.

Please check a box and sign

I have read and understand the description of the research study related to the Urban Secondary School Principals' Influence in College and Career Readiness for Students from Underrepresented Populations: Practices that Build upon Capital within Schools. I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study.

☐ I agree to our schools participating in the research study.

☐ I do not agree to our schools participating in the research study.

_____ _____

Signature Date

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant please contact Ron Banks, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-244-3939, or rbanks@illinois.edu or call the Institutional Review Board collect at 217-333-2670 or irb@uiuc.edu and identify yourself as a "research participant". The responsible project investigator is Dr. Don Hackmann at the University of Illinois and can be contacted at 217-333-0230 or dghack@illinois.edu with Carmen Gioiosa at the University of Illinois serving as co-project investigator and can be contacted at 312-342-3248 or gioiosa2@illinois.edu.

Please keep a copy of this consent form for your records

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Dissertation Study: Urban Secondary School Principals' Influence in College and Career Readiness for Students from Underrepresented Populations: Practices that Build upon Capital within Schools

INFORMED CONSENT – School Site Participation

[Name of school] has been selected to participate in a doctoral study that is facilitated by Dr. Donald Hackmann and Ms. Carmen Gioiosa from the University of Illinois. This study has been approved by the University of Illinois' Institutional Review Board (IRB) and district's Research Review Board (RRB). The purpose of this study will be to explore and understand the leadership practices of secondary school principals that have created a college and career readiness pathway for students from underrepresented populations in a large urban city. The study seeks also to understand whether social justice ideologies influenced the philosophy of the urban principals as they built upon the cultural assets students from underrepresented populations brought to schools to enhance college and career opportunities.

To assist with our understanding of leadership practices that build upon the cultural assets students bring to school and in fostering their postsecondary opportunities, it is important for the researchers to engage in some research activities. The data collection for this study will consist of the following: (a) conducting a face-to-face interview with the principal, (b) observation of the principal during a school walk-through, in meetings, and/or during classroom walk-throughs, (c) a school faculty focus group interview, (d) a student focus group interview, (e) a parent/legal guardian focus group interview, and (f) a review and examination of documents that pertain to the school site including, but not limited to student data.

Should you choose to participate, the principal will participate in a face-to-face interview, which should last no longer than 90 minutes. The researcher would also like to observe the principal for at least two school days in meetings and/or during classroom walk-throughs in addition to reviewing and examining documents that pertain to the school site. The researcher will take notes related to principals' practices and behaviors in supporting a college and career readiness framework for all students, but in particular students from underrepresented populations. The researcher would also like to schedule focus group interviews with school faculty, students, and parents/legal guardians that should last no longer than 90 minutes during non-instructional school time, with the exception of parent/legal guardian interviews.

To protect confidentiality of the participants, no personally identifying information will be written about the faculty or students during the note-taking process. The notes from any observation will be kept secure and the results will only be reported in the aggregate. The field notes will be transcribed, removing any personally identifiable information and using pseudonyms. All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed with all identifying information removed to protect confidentiality of all participants. Participant responses will be kept secure and they will receive a copy of the transcript by email attachment or postal mail to double-check the information, and they may be contacted by telephone, email, or postal mail for clarification of their interview responses, if necessary.

Allowing the individuals to participation in this research study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your professional employment in any way or your relations with the University of Illinois. You may elect to terminate this study if at any time you begin to feel uncomfortable about the experience. We do not anticipate any risk to this study greater than normal life and we anticipate that the results will increase our understanding of effective leadership practices in secondary schools that build upon the cultural assets students bring to school in furthering their postsecondary opportunities. This information will be used as part of a doctoral dissertation and may be shared in a conference presentation or publication. No personally identifying information will be included in any presentation, proposal, or publication.

See Reverse for Signature

Please check a box and sign

I have read and understand the description of the research study related to the Urban Secondary School Principals' Influence in College and Career Readiness for Students from Underrepresented Populations: Practices that Build upon Capital within Schools. I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study.

☐ I agree to our school site participating in the research study.

☐ I do not agree to our school site participating in the research study.

_____ _____

Signature Date

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant please contact Ron Banks, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-244-3939, or rbanks@illinois.edu or call the Institutional Review Board collect at 217-333-2670 or irb@uiuc.edu and identify yourself as a "research participant". The responsible project investigator is Dr. Don Hackmann at the University of Illinois and can be contacted at 217-333-0230 or dghack@illinois.edu with Carmen Gioiosa at the University of Illinois serving as co-project investigator and can be contacted at 312-342-3248 or gioiosa2@illinois.edu.

Please keep a copy of this consent form for your records

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Dissertation Study: Urban Secondary School Principals' Influence in College and Career Readiness for Students from Underrepresented Populations: Practices that Build upon Capital within Schools

INFORMED CONSENT – Principal Screener Phone Interview

[Name of principal] has been nominated to participate in a doctoral study that is facilitated by Dr. Donald Hackmann and Ms. Carmen Gioiosa from the University of Illinois. This study has been approved by the University of Illinois' Institutional Review Board (IRB) and district's Research Review Board (RRB). The purpose of this study will be to explore and understand the leadership practices of secondary school principals that have created a college and career readiness pathway for students from underrepresented populations in a large urban city. The study seeks also to understand whether social justice ideologies influenced the philosophy of the urban principals as they built upon the cultural assets students from underrepresented populations brought to schools to enhance college and career opportunities.

To assist with our understanding of leadership practices that build upon the cultural assets students bring to school and in fostering their postsecondary opportunities, it is important for the researchers to engage in some research activities. During this portion of the study, we are conducting initial phone interviews of principals that have met the study's initial criteria. Should you choose to participate, you will participate in a phone interview, which should last no longer 30 minutes. Detailed notes will be taken during the interview with all identifying information removed to protect confidentiality of the participant. Your responses will be kept secure and the results of the interview will determine your future involvement in the study.

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your professional employment in any way or your relations with the University of Illinois. You may elect to terminate this activity if at any time you begin to feel uncomfortable about the experience. We do not anticipate any risk to this study greater than normal life and we anticipate that the results will increase our understanding of effective leadership practices in elementary level schools. This information will be used as part of a doctoral dissertation and may be shared in a conference presentation or publication. No personally identifying information will be included in any presentation, proposal, or publication.

See Reverse for Signature

Please check a box and sign

I have read and understand the description of the research study related to the Urban Secondary School Principals' Influence in College and Career Readiness for Students from Underrepresented Populations: Practices that Build upon Capital within Schools. I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study.

☐ I agree to be interviewed with notes taken for the purpose of transcription.

☐ I do not agree to be interviewed with notes taken for the purpose of transcription.

_____ _____

Signature Date

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant please contact Ron Banks, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-244-3939, or rbanks@illinois.edu or call the Institutional Review Board collect at 217-333-2670 or irb@uiuc.edu and identify yourself as a "research participant". The responsible project investigator is Dr. Don Hackmann at the University of Illinois and can be contacted at 217-333-0230 or dghack@illinois.edu with Carmen Gioiosa at the University of Illinois serving as co-project investigator and can be contacted at 312-342-3248 or gioiosa2@illinois.edu.

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INFORMED CONSENT – Principal Interview

[Name of principal] has been selected to participate in a doctoral study that is facilitated by Dr. Donald Hackmann and Ms. Carmen Gioiosa from the University of Illinois. This study has been approved by the University of Illinois' Institutional Review Board (IRB) and district's Research Review Board (RRB). The purpose of this study will be to explore and understand the leadership practices of secondary school principals that have created a college and career readiness pathway for students from underrepresented populations in a large urban city. The study seeks also to understand whether social justice ideologies influenced the philosophy of the urban principals as they built upon the cultural assets students from underrepresented populations brought to schools to enhance college and career opportunities.

To assist with our understanding of leadership practices that build upon the cultural assets students bring to school and in fostering their postsecondary opportunities, it is important for the researchers to engage in some research activities. The data collection for this study will consist of the following: (a) conducting a face-to-face interview with the principal, (b) observation of the principal during a school walk-through, in meetings, and/or during classroom walk-throughs, (c) a school faculty focus group interview, (d) a student focus group interview, (e) a parent/legal guardian focus group interview, and (f) a review and examination of documents that pertain to the school site including, but not limited to student data. During this portion of the study, we are conducting face-to-face interviews of the principals at selected schools.

Should you choose to participate, the principal will participate in a face-to-face interview, which should last no longer than 90 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed with all identifying information removed to protect confidentiality of the participant, school, faculty, students, and parents/legal guardians. Your responses will be kept secure. You will receive a copy of the transcript by email attachment to double-check the information, and you may be contacted by telephone or email for clarification of your interview responses.

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your professional employment in any way or your relations with the University of Illinois. You may elect to terminate this observation if at any time you begin to feel uncomfortable about the experience. We do not anticipate any risk to this study greater than normal life and we anticipate that the results will increase our understanding of effective leadership practices in elementary level schools. This information will be used as part of a doctoral dissertation and may be shared in a conference presentation or publication. No personally identifying information will be included in any presentation, proposal, or publication.

See Reverse for Signature

Please check a box and sign

I have read and understand the description of the research study related to the Urban Secondary School Principals' Influence in College and Career Readiness for Students from Underrepresented Populations: Practices that Build upon Capital within Schools. I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study.

☐ I agree to be interviewed and audio-recorded with notes taken for the purpose of transcription.

☐ I do not agree to be interviewed or audio-recorded with notes taken for the purpose of transcription.

_____ _____

Signature Date

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant please contact Ron Banks, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-244-3939, or rbanks@illinois.edu or call the Institutional Review Board collect at 217-333-2670 or irb@uiuc.edu and identify yourself as a "research participant". The responsible project investigator is Dr. Don Hackmann at the University of Illinois and can be contacted at 217-333-0230 or dghack@illinois.edu with Carmen Gioiosa at the University of Illinois serving as co-project investigator and can be contacted at 312-342-3248 or gioiosa2@illinois.edu.

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Dissertation Study: Urban Secondary School Principals' Influence in College and Career Readiness for Students from Underrepresented Populations: Practices that Build upon Capital within Schools

INFORMED CONSENT – School Site Meeting or Walk-throughs

[Name of school] is participating in a doctoral study that is facilitated by Dr. Donald Hackmann and Ms. Carmen Gioiosa from the University of Illinois. The purpose of this study will be to explore and understand the leadership practices of secondary school principals that have created a college and career readiness pathway for students from underrepresented populations in a large urban city. The study seeks also to understand whether social justice ideologies influenced the philosophy of the urban principals as they built upon the cultural assets students from underrepresented populations brought to schools to enhance college and career opportunities.

To assist with our understanding of leadership practices that build upon the cultural assets students bring to school and in fostering their postsecondary opportunities, it is important for the researchers to engage in some research activities. During this portion of the study, we will be observing the principal in meetings or classroom walk-throughs that demonstrate the school's college and career readiness framework or practices that build upon the cultural assets of student from underrepresented populations. These meetings or walk-throughs will involve all normally participating members who consent to the observation and note-taking. Individuals who do not elect to participate in this study will be excused.

Should you choose to participate, the researcher will quietly and silently observe your schools' meeting or classroom, taking notes related to principals' practices and behaviors in supporting a college and career readiness framework for all students, but in particular students from underrepresented populations. It is anticipated that the observation will be the usual duration of your schools' meetings or school hours.

To protect confidentiality of the participants, no personally identifying information will be written about the school, faculty, students, and/or parents/legal guardians during the note-taking process. The notes from any observation will be kept secure and the results will only be reported in the aggregate. The field notes will be transcribed, removing any personally identifiable information and using pseudonyms. You will receive a copy of the transcript by email attachment to double-check the information and may be contacted by telephone or email for clarification. The notes from any observation will be kept secure and the results will only be reported in the aggregate.

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your professional employment in any way or your relations with the University of Illinois. You may elect to terminate this observation if at any time you begin to feel uncomfortable about the experience. We do not anticipate any risk to this study greater than normal life and we anticipate that the results will increase our understanding of effective leadership practices in elementary level schools. This information will be used as part of a doctoral dissertation and may be shared in a conference presentation or publication. No personally identifying information will be included in any presentation, proposal, or publication.

See Reverse for Signature

Please check a box and sign

I have read and understand the description of the research study related to the Urban Secondary School Principals' Influence in College and Career Readiness for Students from Underrepresented Populations: Practices that Build upon Capital within Schools. I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study.

☐ I agree to the observation with note taking of my participation in a meeting with the principal or during a classroom walk-through.

☐ I do not agree to the observation or note taking of my participation in a meeting with the principal or during a classroom walk-through.

_____ _____

Signature Date

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant please contact Ron Banks, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-244-3939, or rbanks@illinois.edu or call the Institutional Review Board collect at 217-333-2670 or irb@uiuc.edu and identify yourself as a "research participant". The responsible project investigator is Dr. Don Hackmann at the University of Illinois and can be contacted at 217-333-0230 or dghack@illinois.edu with Carmen Gioiosa at the University of Illinois serving as co-project investigator and can be contacted at 312-342-3248 or gioiosa2@illinois.edu.

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Dissertation Study: Urban Secondary School Principals' Influence in College and Career Readiness for Students from Underrepresented Populations: Practices that Build upon Capital within Schools

INFORMED CONSENT – School Faculty Focus Group Interview

[Name of school] is participating in a doctoral study that is facilitated by Dr. Donald Hackmann and Ms. Carmen Gioiosa from the University of Illinois. The purpose of this study will be to explore and understand the leadership practices of secondary school principals that have created a college and career readiness pathway for students from underrepresented populations in a large urban city. The study seeks also to understand whether social justice ideologies influenced the philosophy of the urban principals as they built upon the cultural assets students from underrepresented populations brought to schools to enhance college and career opportunities.

To assist with our understanding of leadership practices that build upon the cultural assets students bring to school and in fostering their postsecondary opportunities, it is important for the researchers to engage in some research activities. During this portion of the study, we are conducting focus group interviews of participating school faculty members.

Should you choose to participate, you will participate in a focus group interview, which should last no longer than 60 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed with all identifying information removed to protect confidentiality of the participants. Your responses will be kept secure. You will receive a copy of the transcript by email attachment to double-check the information, and you may be contacted by telephone or email for clarification of your interview responses, if necessary. Pizza and water or bagels and coffee may be provided, depending on the location of the interview and/or the principal's consent.

To protect confidentiality of the participants, no personally identifying information will be written about the school, faculty, students, and/or parents/legal guardians during the note-taking process. The notes from any observation will be kept secure and the results will only be reported in the aggregate. However, while I promise to maintain confidentiality, the nature of a focus group does not allow me to guarantee that others participating in the group will not divulge information outside the research. The field notes will be transcribed, removing any personally identifiable information and using pseudonyms. You will receive a copy of the transcript by email attachment to double-check the information and may be contacted by telephone or email for clarification. The notes from any observation will be kept secure and the results will only be reported in the aggregate.

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your professional employment in any way or your relations with the University of Illinois. You may elect to terminate this observation if at any time you begin to feel uncomfortable about the experience. We do not anticipate any risk to this study greater than normal life and we anticipate that the results will increase our understanding of effective leadership practices in elementary level schools. This information will be used as part of a doctoral dissertation and may be shared in a conference presentation or publication. No personally identifying information will be included in any presentation, proposal, or publication.

See Reverse for Signature

Please check a box and sign

I have read and understand the description of the research study related to the Urban Secondary School Principals' Influence in College and Career Readiness for Students from Underrepresented Populations: Practices that Build upon Capital within Schools. I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study.

☐ I agree to be interviewed with notes taken for the purpose of transcription.

☐ I do not agree to be interviewed with notes taken for the purpose of transcription.

_____ _____

Signature Date

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant please contact Ron Banks, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-244-3939, or rbanks@illinois.edu or call the Institutional Review Board collect at 217-333-2670 or irb@uiuc.edu and identify yourself as a "research participant". The responsible project investigator is Dr. Don Hackmann at the University of Illinois and can be contacted at 217-333-0230 or dghack@illinois.edu with Carmen Gioiosa at the University of Illinois serving as co-project investigator and can be contacted at 312-342-3248 or gioiosa2@illinois.edu.

Please keep a copy of this consent form for your records

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INFORMED CONSENT – Student Focus Group Interview by Parent/Legal Guardian

Dear Parent/Legal Guardian:

We are from the Department of Education at the University of Illinois and we would like to include your child, along with about 10 other students from [name of school], in a group interview to explore and understand how high schools have prepared students for college and career opportunities after graduation. Below I outline the specific details about the study and your child's involvement.

Interview process: The researcher will record on paper student responses to interview questions while audio recording the interview to ensure all responses were recorded exactly as said. Responses and audio recording will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

When: Before or after school, depending on your child's schedule and transportation, for approximately 60-90 minutes.

Where: At [name of school].

Why: This study will help to provide valuable insights into the creation and support of a college and career readiness framework that has proven successful with students from underrepresented populations.

Right to privacy: The information that is obtained during this research study will be kept strictly confidential and will not become a part of your child's school record or affect your relationship with [name of school] or the University of Illinois. Your child's name **will not** be included on any notes or documents related to the study. However, while I promise to maintain confidentiality, the nature of a focus group does not allow me to guarantee that others participating in the group will not divulge information outside the research.

Food & beverage: Researcher will abide by the school's regulation as to whether food and beverage may be provided. If food is provided, it will most likely be pizza and a water beverage or bagels and juice.

Student compensation: Your child will receive a gift card to a local food eatery or CTA fare card (value not to exceed $5).

After the interview: Your child will be asked to review the interview transcript to ensure the researcher did not misrepresent your child's response and make any changes. Interview transcripts will either be emailed or delivered through postal mail to you and your child, with a postage paid return envelope. Please feel free to review the transcript with your child.

Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary. In addition to your permission, your child's permission is also required to take part in this study and will be acknowledged through her/his signature on the back of this letter. Only those children who have parental/legal guardian permission and who want to participate will do so, and any child may stop taking part at any time. You are free to withdraw your permission for your child's participation at any time and for any reason without penalty. The researcher does not anticipate any risk to your child during this study greater than normal life.

On the next page, please indicate and sign whether you do or do not want your child to participate in this study. Please return this form to your child's school's MAIN OFFICE before DATE.

Sincerely,

Carmen Gioiosa
773-909-0917
gioiosa2@illinois.edu

Dr. Donald Hackmann
217-333-0230
dghack@illinois.edu

APPROVED
MAR 11 2013
INST REVIEW BOARD

Please check boxes and sign for parent/legal guardian consent and student participation on backside.

A	As the parent/legal guardian, I have read and understand the description of the group interview. 1. ◯ Yes, I agree to have my child, _____, participate. 2. Can your child be audio-recorded for the purpose of transcription? ◯ Yes ◯ No 3. ◯ No, I do not consent for my child to participate. _____ _____ _____ (Print) Parent's/Legal Guardian's name (Signature) Parent/Legal Guardian Date
B	As the parent/legal guardian, I allow a copy of my child's high school transcript to be released to the researcher to review the courses my child has taken during high school. I understand the transcript will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. Denial to review the student's high school transcript does not preclude the student from participating in the research study. ◯ Yes ◯ No _____ _____ _____ (Print) Parent's/Legal Guardian's name (Signature) Parent/Legal Guardian Date
C	As a student at Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences, I have read and understand the description of the group interview. 1. ◯ Yes, I agree to be interviewed. 2. Can I audio-record our interview for the purpose of transcription? ◯ Yes ◯ No 3. ◯ No, I do not agree to be interviewed. _____ _____ _____ (Print) Student's name (Signature) Student Date

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant please contact Ron Banks, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-244-3939, or rbanks@illinois.edu or call the Institutional Review Board collect at 217-333-2670 or irb@uiuc.edu and identify yourself as a "research participant". The responsible project investigator is Dr. Don Hackmann at the University of Illinois and can be contacted at 217-333-0230 or dghack@illinois.edu with Carmen Gioiosa at the University of Illinois serving as co-project investigator and can be contacted at 217-244-9598 or gioiosa2@illinois.edu.

The researcher will provide you with a copy of this form for your records.

Parents please be aware that under the Protection of Pupil Rights Act, 20 U.S.C. Section 1232(c)(1)(A), you have the right to review a copy of the questions asked of or materials that will be used with your students. If you would like to do so, you should contact Carmen Gioiosa at (217) 244-9598 to obtain a copy of the questions or materials.

Looking for Parents/Legal Guardians to participate in a group interview—Can you spend 60 minutes answering questions about how schools help prepare students for college and career opportunities after graduation? Translators can be provided, if needed.

Please print your name below and provide a phone number to make arrangements for the interview.

_____ _____

(Print) Parent's/Legal Guardian's name Contact information (phone number or email address)

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INFORMED CONSENT – Student Focus Group Interview by Parent/Legal Guardian

Dear Parent/Legal Guardian:

We are from the Department of Education at the University of Illinois and we would like to include your child, along with about 10 other students from [name of school], in a group interview to explore and understand how high schools have prepared students for college and career opportunities after graduation. Below I outline the specific details about the study and your child's involvement.

Interview process: The researcher will record on paper student responses to interview questions while audio recording the interview to ensure all responses were recorded exactly as said. Responses and audio recording will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

When: Before or after school, depending on your child's schedule and transportation, for approximately 60-90 minutes.

Where: At [name of school].

Why: This study will help to provide valuable insights into the creation and support of a college and career readiness framework that has proven successful with students from underrepresented populations.

Right to privacy: The information that is obtained during this research study will be kept strictly confidential and will not become a part of your child's school record or affect your relationship with [name of school] or the University of Illinois. Your child's name **will not** be included on any notes or documents related to the study. However, while I promise to maintain confidentiality, the nature of a focus group does not allow me to guarantee that others participating in the group will not divulge information outside the research.

Food & beverage: Researcher will abide by the school's regulation as to whether food and beverage may be provided. If food is provided, it will most likely be pizza and a water beverage or bagels and juice.

Student compensation: Your child will receive a gift card to a local food eatery or CTA fare card (value not to exceed $5).

After the interview: Your child will be asked to review the interview transcript to ensure the researcher did not misrepresent your child's response and make any changes. Interview transcripts will either be emailed or delivered through postal mail to you and your child, with a postage paid return envelope. Please feel free to review the transcript with your child.

Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary. In addition to your permission, your child's permission is also required to take part in this study and will be acknowledged through her/his signature on the back of this letter. Only those children who have parental/legal guardian permission and who want to participate will do so, and any child may stop taking part at any time. You are free to withdraw your permission for your child's participation at any time and for any reason without penalty. The researcher does not anticipate any risk to your child during this study greater than normal life.

On the next page, please indicate and sign whether you do or do not want your child to participate in this study. Please return this form to your child's school's MAIN OFFICE before DATE.

Sincerely,

Carmen Gioiosa
773-909-0917
gioiosa2@illinois.edu

Dr. Donald Hackmann
217-333-0230
dghack@illinois.edu

APPROVED
MAR 11 2013
INST REVIEW BOARD

Please check boxes and sign for parent/legal guardian consent and student participation on backside.

1	As the parent/legal guardian, I have read and understand the description of the group interview. ◯ Yes, I agree to have my child, _____, participate and to be interviewed and audio-recorded with notes taken for the purpose of transcription. ◯ No, I do not consent for my child, _____, to participate. _____ _____ _____ (Print) Parent's/Legal Guardian's name (Signature) Parent/Legal Guardian Date
2	As the parent/legal guardian, I allow a copy of my child's high school transcript to be released to the researcher to review the courses my child has taken during high school. I understand the transcript will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. Denial to review the student's high school transcript does not preclude the student from participating in the research study. ◯ Yes ◯ No _____ _____ _____ (Print) Parent's/Legal Guardian's name (Signature) Parent/Legal Guardian Date
3	As a student at East Leyden High School, I have read and understand the description of the group interview. ◯ Yes, I agree to be interviewed and audio-recorded with notes taken for the purpose of transcription. ◯ No, I do not agree to be interviewed or audio-recorded with notes taken for the purpose of transcription. _____ _____ _____ (Print) Student's name (Signature) Student Date

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant please contact Ron Banks, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-244-3939, or rbanks@illinois.edu or call the Institutional Review Board collect at 217-333-2670 or irb@uiuc.edu and identify yourself as a "research participant". The responsible project investigator is Dr. Don Hackmann at the University of Illinois and can be contacted at 217-333-0230 or dghack@illinois.edu with Carmen Gioiosa at the University of Illinois serving as co-project investigator and can be contacted at 217-244-9598 or gioiosa2@illinois.edu.

The researcher will provide you with a copy of this form for your records.

Looking for Parents/Legal Guardians to participate in a group interview—Would you be available for a group interview with about 10 other parents/legal guardians from East Leyden High School?

Can you spend 60 minutes answering questions about how schools can help prepare students for college and career opportunities after graduation? Translators can be provided, if needed. Public transportation fare cards will be provided to reimburse for your transportation.

Please sign below and provide a phone number or contact information to arrange for time and place for the interview.

_____ _____

Parent's/Legal Guardian's signature Contact information (phone number, email address, or home address)

Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership
College of Education
351 Education Building
1310 South Sixth Street
Champaign, IL 61820

Dissertation Study: Urban Secondary School Principals' Influence in College and Career Readiness for Students from Underrepresented Populations: Practices that Build upon Capital within Schools

INFORMED CONSENT – Parent/Legal Guardian Focus Group Interview

Dear Parent/Legal Guardian:

We are from the Department of Education at the University of Illinois and we would like to include you, along with about 10 other parents/legal guardians from [name of school], in a group interview to explore and understand how high schools have prepared students for college and career opportunities after graduation. Translators can be provided, if needed. Below I outline the specific details about the study and your involvement. If you agree to participate, the researcher will coordinate an interview time and location that is most convenient to the entire group of parents/legal guardians after contacting all participants. Please provide contact information next to your signature.

Interview process: The researcher will record on paper each parent/legal guardian response to interview questions while audio-recording the interview to ensure all responses were recorded exactly as said.

When: Before or after school, depending on your schedule, for approximately 60-90 minutes.

Where: At [name of school] or a location more convenient for parents/legal guardians.

Why: This study will help to provide valuable insights into the creation and support of a college and career readiness framework that has proven successful with students from underrepresented populations.

Right to privacy: The information that is obtained during this research study will be kept strictly confidential and will not become a part of your child's school record or affect your relationship with [name of school] or the University of Illinois. Your name or your child's name **will not** be included on any notes or documents related to the study. However, while I promise to maintain confidentiality, the nature of a focus group does not allow me to guarantee that others participating in the group will not divulge information outside the research.

Food & beverage: Researcher will abide by the school's regulation as to whether food and beverage may be provided. If food is provided, it will most likely be pizza and a water beverage or bagels and juice.

Parent/legal guardian compensation: You will receive a gift card to a local food eatery or CTA fare card (value not to exceed $10).

After the interview: You will be asked to review the interview transcript to ensure the researcher did not misrepresent your response. Interview transcripts will either be emailed or delivered through postal mail to you, with a postage paid return envelope.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from participation at any time and for any reason without penalty. The researcher does not anticipate any risk to you during this study greater than normal life.

On the next page, please indicate whether you will participate in this study and provide contact your contact information. Please bring this form to the group interview.

Sincerely,

Carmen Gioiosa
773-909-0917
gioiosa2@illinois.edu

Dr. Donald Hackmann
217-333-0230
dghack@illinois.edu

Please check a box and sign for parent/legal guardian consent on backside.

Please check a box and sign

I have read and understand the description of the research study. I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study.

☐ I agree to be interviewed and audio-recorded with notes taken for the purpose of transcription.

☐ I do not agree to be interviewed or audio-recorded with notes taken for the purpose of transcription.

_____

(Print) Parent's/Legal Guardian's name

_____ _____

Parent's/Legal Guardian's signature Date

_____

Contact information (phone number, email address, or home address)

APPR[illegible]
MAR 1 1 2013
INST REVIEW BOARD

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant please contact Ron Banks, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-244-3939, or rbanks@illinois.edu or call the Institutional Review Board collect at 217-333-2670 or irb@uiuc.edu and identify yourself as a "research participant". The responsible project investigator is Dr. Don Hackmann at the University of Illinois and can be contacted at 217-333-0230 or dghack@illinois.edu with Carmen Gioiosa at the University of Illinois serving as co-project investigator and can be contacted at 312-342-3248 or gioiosa2@illinois.edu.

The researcher will provide you with a copy of this form for your records.

Appendix D

Principal Interview Protocol

Principal:_____ [INTERVIEW PROTOCOL] January 13, 2013

1. You were selected for this study because you have improved college and/or career readiness for students, in particular students from underrepresented populations; please describe the leadership beliefs that influence your success or work. (If principal mentions social justice, ask for a definition)

2. Please share or describe how your leadership empowers your faculty and staff to promote college and career readiness for all students, in particular students from underrepresented populations?

3. What school policies have you implemented to facilitate the college and career readiness of students from underrepresented populations?

4. What school structures are currently in place that promote college and career readiness? Did you implement or design the model or was it a part of the school prior to your tenure?

5. What school practices have you promoted within the school to help students from underrepresented populations bridge the gap between high school and postsecondary opportunities?

6. Given your school's demographics, how do you build upon the cultural assets or cultural wealth that students from underrepresented populations bring to your school?

7. Do you believe your leadership beliefs or practices are socially just? (If principal says yes, ask for a definition)

8. How do students learn about college and career opportunities?

9. How do students select their courses or program of study?

10. What type of training do you provide teachers and staff?

11. Is the community involved in college and career readiness? Who in particular?

12. What is the school's relationship with community colleges, universities, and/or trade schools?

13. What prepared you in developing a college and career readiness framework?

14. What prepared you to support the postsecondary landscape for students from underrepresented populations?

15. How would you support other principals in developing a college and career framework for students from underrepresented populations?

Appendix E

Focus Group Interview Protocols

Focus Group Interview Protocol—School Faculty Members

School Faculty Focus Group Inventory (to be completed by each individual faculty member prior to interview or at the beginning of the interview):

Female or Male	
Self-reported Racial Background	
Self-reported Cultural Background	
Highest education level attained	
Country of education/schooling	
Identify school committee membership/s	
Subject/s taught or daily responsibilities	
Years as an educator	

1) How do you define college readiness?

2) How do you define career readiness?

Focus Group Questions:

1) Please describe how Principal name communicates her/his vision of college and career readiness for all students, in particular students from underrepresented populations.

2) Please describe how Principal name promotes college and career readiness for all students, in particular students from underrepresented populations. (Seek names of school programs or policies.)

3) What type of training or professional development in implementing a college and career readiness framework has Principal name provided you?

4) In your classroom or Department, how do you bridge the gap between high school and postsecondary opportunities?

5) Do you believe [insert name of school] understands the cultural backgrounds or family history of its students? (Seek specific example from the focus group as to how the school builds upon students' cultural background or family history.)

6) Do you believe [insert name of school] is a socially just place? In other words, appreciates, understands, and builds upon every student's cultural background or family history? (Seek a definition of social justice by focus group.)

7) How do you evaluate Principal name effectiveness in creating a college and career readiness framework?

Optional question:

1) Do you believe a high school education is relevant to the lives of your students?

Focus Group Interview Protocol—Student

Focus Group Student Inventory (to be completed by each individual student prior to interview):

Female or Male	
Age	
Self-reported Racial Background	
Self-reported Cultural Background	
Self-reported Year in school	
Self-reported GPA	
Highest education level of parent/legal guardian	
Country of parent's/legal guardian's education/schooling	

1) Please describe in detail your career interest/s.

2) Please identify the number of classes you have taken in your interested career field.

3) Please describe in detail your interest in college or a postsecondary program like a trade or technical school?

4) In your opinion, will high school prepare you for a successful future in a postsecondary school or career? Why or why not?

5) In your opinion, what class/classes are missing from high school?

6) What would your high school plan look like if you could create it?

Focus Group Questions:

1. How do you learn about college and career opportunities? (Seek where or to whom they turn for information.)
2. Who is involved in helping you plan for college or a career? (Seek specific examples.)
3. How do you select your classes or program of study? (Seek whether parents/legal guardians review class schedule or meet with counselors/school staff.)
4. Please describe how the principal, teachers, or staff promote college and career readiness for all students, in particular students from underrepresented populations. (Seek names of programs or teachers/staff and definitions of college and career readiness.)
5. Do you believe your high school education is relevant to your lives?
6. Do you believe [insert name of school] understands your cultural background or family history? (Seek whether students believe school builds upon their cultural background or family history.)
7. Do you believe [insert name of school] is a socially just place? In other words, appreciates, understands, and builds upon every student's cultural background or family history? (Seek a definition of social justice by focus group.)

Optional question:

1. Based on your cultural background, what talents or abilities do you bring to school?

Focus Group Interview Protocol—Parent/Legal Guardian

Focus Group Parent Inventory (to be completed by each individual parent/legal guardian prior to interview or at the beginning of the interview):

Female or Male	
Self-reported Racial Background	
Self-reported Cultural Background	
Self-reported Child/Children's Year in school	
Self-reported Child/Children's GPA	
Highest education level of parent/legal guardian	
Country of parent's/legal guardian's education/schooling	

1) Please describe in detail your interest in college for your child/children.

2) Please describe in detail a career interest/s you have for your child/children.

Focus Group Questions:

As a parent/legal guardian,

1. How do you learn about college and career opportunities for your child/children? (Seek whether the Principal/School reach reaches out to parents/legal guardians or an organization, website, other family members, or community members.)
2. Do you know how your daughter or son selects her/his classes? (Seek whether parents/legal guardians review class schedule or meet with counselors/school staff.)
3. Can you describe how Principal name promotes college and career readiness for all students, in particular students from underrepresented populations? (Seek names of programs and definitions of college and career readiness.)
4. Do you believe your child's/children's high school education is relevant to your lives?
5. Do you believe [insert name of school] understands your cultural background or family history? (Seek specific example from the focus group as to how the school builds upon their cultural background or family history.)
6. Do you believe [insert name of school] is a socially just place? In other words, appreciates, understands, and builds upon every student's cultural background or family history? (Seek a definition of social justice by focus group.)

Optional questions:

1. As a parent/legal guardian, do you know of relationships between [insert name of school] and community colleges, universities, and/or trade schools?
2. As a parent/legal guardian, do you believe high school will prepare your child/children for a successful future in a postsecondary school or career?

Appendix F

Principal Observation Protocol

School Name: _____[OBSERVATION PROTOCOL] January 13, 2013

Type of observation:

- ☐ school walk-through
  - focus:
- ☐ meeting
  - participant/s:
  - locations:
  - time:
  - focus/topic:
  - permitted informed consent:
- ☐ classroom walk-through
  - participants:
  - location:
  - time:
  - focus/topic:
  - permitted informed consent:

School Name: _____ [OBSERVATION PROTOCOL] January 13, 2013

Just	Empathic
Democratic	Optimistic